

JIMMY JOHN AND JUNIOR

JOSEPH CHASE



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JUNIOR FLUNG A HANDFUL OF CORN

JIMMY JOHN AND JUNIOR

By
JOSEPH CHASE

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Jimmy John and Junior

Manufacturing
Plant
Camden, N. J.



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“ Oh, let him go *that* far,” John spoke impatiently. He was not fond of minding Junior. “ We can catch him if he tries to go out the gate.”

“ No; he’s got to come back. Mother said not to let him off the porch.”

Jimmy was the most obedient of the three Hopkins boys. He was eleven years old and John was ten. John was inclined to slide out of minding and Junior did not like to mind at all. But then, Junior was only five and was just beginning to find out how nice it was to have his own way.

Junior’s true name was Alexander David, the same as his father’s. No one but his great-aunt Elizabeth ever called him that. Everyone said Junior was such a dear little boy. He had a round rosy face and a head of fluffy yellow curls. His eyes were very blue and his nose turned up a little. He and Jimmy looked a little alike for Jimmy had blue eyes and yellow hair, too. John’s hair and eyes were brown and his face was thin instead of round. He was almost as tall as Jimmy, but not nearly so strong, nor did he have as sweet and sunny a disposition as his older brother.

“ There now! ” Jimmy exclaimed as he caught

Junior by the shoulder. "I've got you! You can't wiggle away from me, Mr. Junie." He pretended he was holding Junior very tightly as he marched him back to the veranda. He set the runaway on the top step of the veranda and ran a teasing hand through Junior's curls until they stood straight up on his head. "You sit there now and be a good boy—if you can."

"I are always a good boy, Jimmy," protested Junior.

"Yes, you are." Jimmy went on wooling him until he gurgled and shouted with laughter.

"What's happening out here?" Mrs. Hopkins, the boys' pretty golden-haired mother, suddenly appeared in the open front door, a large, covered willow basket in her hands. Behind her came Netta, the maid, carrying another covered basket. They set the baskets on the floor of the veranda.

"Oh, I'm just funning with Junie," Jimmy laughed. "Aren't we nearly ready to start, Mother? It's ten o'clock. Father said he'd be here at ten sharp."

"It's ten minutes past ten, and I wish it weren't," his mother replied. "Netta and I still have a good deal to see to."

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“Me-ew! Me-eow!” came plaintively from one of the baskets.

“Poor Sunshine. He doesn’t know what to make of being shut in. He has mewed ever since I put him in the basket,” Mrs. Hopkins said.

“Maybe he thinks he’s going to be killed. Poor Sunny Sunshine! You’re all right. No one’s going to hurt you.” John spoke reassuringly to Sunshine.

Sunshine and his fat, yellow Angora brother, Taffy, were all ready to go on a journey. Sunshine was a bright golden color with a wide orange stripe down the middle of his back. He had a coral-pink nose and mouth and large pale green eyes. Taffy was a cream-yellow with a white necktie. His nose and mouth were as pink as Sunshine’s, but his eyes were golden. Sometimes they changed to very deep brown. Both cats had long, fluffy hair and full ruffles around their faces and waving, plummy tails. Taffy weighed eighteen pounds and Sunshine twenty. They were both six years old and had been given to Jimmy on his fifth birthday when they were tiny balls of kittens.

“Taffy isn’t making a bit of noise. He’s as quiet as can be.” John pried up the lid of

Taffy's basket a trifle and peeped in at the Angora puss.

"He's so scared he can't mew, I guess. Doesn't it seem queer that this very morning we're going away from this house for good?" Jimmy sat down by Sunshine's basket, his round face quite sober. "Just think! This house is where we've *always* been. After we go away to-day we won't see it any more ever. I've had good times here, too, and I like the boys and girls in this street."

"Oh, we'll see it again some time. Maybe we'll make somebody in this street a visit some day. I wouldn't want to live in the same house for always," John said very positively. "What I like to think about is the fun we'll have in the country. We're going to be right close to fields and woods and maybe a pond or a brook and ——"

"A great big yard, with fruit trees and a garden and chickens," Jimmy broke in eagerly. "It will be splendid. Sunshine and Taffy'll have a fine time, too. Won't you, old kitten-cats?"

"Ya-as," came loudly from Sunshine's basket in such a funny way that both boys giggled.

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“He said ‘yes,’” John declared. “There goes Junie again!”

Jimmy had not been watching Junior very closely. Now he made a dash for him just in time to stop his progress out the gate.

“Lemme go! Lemme go, Jimmy!” Junior danced up and down and flapped his hands. “Look! I don’t run ’way! I just going to meet the chilrun! There’s Marj’rie an’ Mary an’ Robert an’ all the chilrun. Hello, chilruns!”

Junior began waving his arms and calling out to a little procession of children who had come out of the house next door and were now passing through their gate to the street. Jimmy loosed Junior and watched the procession in surprise.

They came straight to the Hopkins’ gate and the foremost girl opened it. There were ten of them and a little black-eyed girl, next to the head girl, was carrying a large splint basket. The handle was tied with a bow of wide red satin ribbon and it was filled with packages wrapped in white tissue paper and decorated with narrow red ribbons.

“It’s—why—it’s just like Christmas!” Jimmy cried out.

Just then he caught sight of the last boy in the

line. He was a tall boy of about Jimmy's age and he was holding tightly to a towering cake, covered with pale-pink icing with round red and green candies on the top. John saw him in the same instant. Both boys exclaimed together: "It's a party! It's a party! And it's for us!"

CHAPTER II

A DOORSTEP GOOD-BYE PARTY

JOHN and Jimmy started down the walk to meet the procession which was now through the gate.

"It's my party," shrieked Junior, bumping against Jimmy as he ran to meet the children.

"'Course it's your party, Junie," Helen Davis happily assured him, "but it's John's and Jimmy's party, too." Helen was the girl who headed the group.

Turning to her flock behind her she said, "Now do stand still and don't say a word for a minute. I have to make my speech, you know. After that, go ahead and be noisy."

After a minute the children stood still and almost stopped talking. Helen waited until they were fairly quiet, then she began in a clear high voice:

"We all had permission to stay at home from school this morning just to give you boys a nice

good-bye party and tell you how sorry we are that you are going away from here and how much we shall miss you. Our best wishes go with this basket and we hope you will like everything in it. You mustn't open any of the packages now. You are not to open them until your mother says so. But the cake—that's different. We are all going to sit on your steps and have some of it with you before your papa comes with the automobile. I guess that's all." Helen's cheeks were brilliantly pink.

"We're so s'prised we can't think what to say," Jimmy blurted out, his own cheeks as pink as Helen's. "It's fine to have a party now and see all of you right before we go away."

"Is it? I guess it is! Hurray!" John waved his arms above his head and gave vent to a lusty cheer. "My, but that cake's a whopper! What kind is it, Helen? It's dandy and pink outside, but you can't see how nice it is inside."

"Oh, it's all kinds. The inside, I mean. Mamma made it. It has four layers and there are chopped raisins and nuts and candied cherries and citron and figs all mixed in with the icing. That all goes between the layers."

"Junior wants his first. He says give him a

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great big piece," laughed Robert. "How much may he have?" Robert looked inquiringly at Jimmy as he flourished a cake knife over the pale pink wonder.

"I'll ask Mother." Jimmy turned toward the hall door. He remembered he was host and came back to say "Excuse me" to his guests. Half-way across the hall he met his mother bringing a tall pitcher of lemonade and glasses on a tray. Netta followed her with a larger tray. Jimmy's eyes sparkled. Netta's tray was loaded with plates of brick ice-cream, brown, pink, and white.

A loud cheer greeted Mrs. Hopkins and Netta. Netta took a sheaf of fancy pink and white paper napkins from her wide apron pocket and whisked them among the children who were now seated on the steps of the veranda.

The party just nicely covered the front steps without crowding them. Junior sat on the middle step and chattered to everyone around him. John and Jimmy forgot how impatient they had been for their father to come for them. They were so greatly interested in having this last good time with their playmates that they did not see his car when it finally came round the corner.

He had brought it to a stop in front of the house before any of the children noticed it. Then the cry went up, "There's your car! There's your car!"

"Father'll have to wait until we eat up the ice-cream. Mother says there's enough to go round twice," John said hospitably. "We can't start yet," he called out to his father. "We're having a party. It was a surprise one on us. Anyway, you have to eat some ice-cream and cake, so you can't start, either."

"*Is that so?*" Mr. Hopkins raised his heavy black eyebrows and twisted his face in such a funny way that the children went into a gale of laughter. He had large brown eyes and a round merry face and he was always saying and doing funny things that made children laugh.

"Find me a place to sit down if you expect me to stay to your party. I'm not going to sit up on the veranda all by myself. I want to sit on the steps. I'll have to make some of these great big girls and boys move over and give me room. Shoo, shoo! Move along!" He flourished his arms in front of the wildly giggling children who crowded together to make room for him. He laughed and joked and ate ice-cream

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with them, then he had to hurry into the house for a last look around.

“We’re going to stay until the last last minute,” Robert announced. “Your mother said we might. We want to see you start off in the car and everything. My, but you’re going to have a nice long ride!”

“Don’t I wish I was going, too,” declared Clifford Ware, John’s chum.

“Oh, you had better come and see us—every one of you. You could have a picnic sometime and come then,” invited Jimmy. “Or some of you could come on the train one time and some more another.”

“We will; we will,” the children all promised at once.

After a while Netta appeared with three large bricks of ice-cream on a platter.

“Now whose of yez is for more cream?” she asked in her good-natured Irish brogue. “Do yez be eatin’ it for it won’t keep, and there’s no taking it with yez in the oitymobile.” She divided it among the group.

“I see I’ll have to get busy and cut some more cake.” Robert handed about a second generous helping of the pink-iced cake.

This started the party all over again and the cream and cake soon disappeared while the children chattered like young magpies. They asked Jimmy and John a good many questions. Was it a large house? Was it clear out in the country, all by itself? Would there be any children to play with? How far away were the woods?

"We don't know much more than you do about it," Jimmy said bluntly. "Father and Mother won't tell us a thing. They're saving it for another surprise. We know we are to have a large yard with lots of trees, and we can have a garden; each of us. That's about all we do know. We don't know what station our house is near. We'll have to write a long letter and tell you about it."

"And Junie's going to have a garden, too! What are you going to plant in your garden, Junie?" Marjorie pulled one of Junior's tight golden curls.

"Chickens and bananas," Junior said promptly.

"Oh-h-h-h!" A loud shout went up from the doorstep party.

"You can't plant chickens, you goosie," emphasized John; "and bananas only grow down

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South. You don't know any more about a garden than Taffy does."

"I are goin' to have chickies and bananas," Junior stoutly persisted. "I like 'em. My papa said I could."

"I'm going to have lettuce and corn, string-beans, peas and radishes in my garden," John said with a proud little air; "and maybe cabbages."

"I guess I'll have corn and beans, too," Jimmy declared. "I want tomatoes and cucumbers and beets. Then I'll grow pumpkins in among the corn and maybe some watermelons."

While the children finished their treat they took turns telling what would be nice to have in a garden. Pretty soon Netta came out and collected the empty plates, spoons and glasses in a basket. She had borrowed them from Marjorie's mother because the Hopkins' dishes had already reached their new home. Then Mr. Hopkins came out of the house loaded down with luggage. He carried it out to the car and came back to say good-bye to the little boys and girls who had so long been his sons' playmates.

While he was shaking hands all around, Mrs. Hopkins came out with a leather bag and the

boys' hats. Netta was with her, talking as fast as she could. Netta was to make the journey to the Hopkins' new home by train the next day. She was going to stay in the city over night with her own family.

John and Jimmy felt highly excited as they went down the familiar walk for the last time surrounded by their schoolmates. It was just like stories they had read of little boys who went far away to live and had parties given them before they went. They walked rather slowly, carrying the gift basket between them. Junior danced and pranced ahead of them shouting, "Good-bye, house! Good-bye, house! I are goin' to the chickens where it's all grass an' trees!"

When they reached the automobile Jimmy cried out, "Oh, we almost forgot Taffy and Sunshine. They're on the porch yet!"

"Netta is bringing them." His mother nodded toward the house. Netta was just coming down the steps, a cat-basket on each arm.

Mr. Hopkins helped his wife into the large blue car, then lifted Junior in beside her. Junior kicked his chubby, slippered feet against the

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leather seat and crowed for joy because they were ready to start.

John and Jimmy stood in front of the car for a minute or two to say a last good-bye to their playmates. As they climbed into the car the group of bright-faced children crowded closer, excited and smiling.

“Let’s give three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins and Jimmy and John and Junior,” proposed Robert, his dark face aglow. “Hip-hip-hurrah!”

“Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!” the children shouted, waving hands and handkerchiefs. The cheering kept up until the car rounded the corner. John and Jimmy leaned far out of the car to call and wave vigorous good-byes to their watching chums. Junior stood up on the seat and squealed and pounded on the little window at the back of the car. Even Sunshine said “ya-a-s” and “me-ow.” That was his way of saying good-bye.

Then the automobile turned a corner and the wide tree-lined street in which the Hopkins had lived so long disappeared from view. Jimmy, John and Junior, three little city boys, were fairly started on the way to being three little country boys.

CHAPTER III

A WOODLAND PICNIC

THE Hopkins' car went speeding in and out of the noisy city streets for quite a long time. Jimmy and John watched all that went on about them with eager eyes. The city they were leaving behind them was a very large one. They had never before seen the section of it through which they were now traveling. Junior was interested, too. Every time anything particular caught his eye he had to turn to his mother and ask questions. It kept him so busy bobbing back and forth he missed seeing a good deal.

Near the east end of the city they passed through a wide street called Market Lane. Here the large markets of the city were situated. Mr. Hopkins stopped the car in front of one of the markets and he and Jimmy got out of it. They bought oranges, bananas and early strawberries. Then the blue car scudded on again.

Presently the rows of brick and brown and

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green stone houses, all joined together, were gone. In place of them were houses built of wood or stucco or of white and light-colored stone. These houses had small, close-cut green yards around them. Spring flowers bloomed in the yards.

"Is our house as nice as these?" Jimmy asked his father.

"I promised someone I wouldn't tell."

"What color is it?" Jimmy began afresh.

"Well, it might be sky-blue-pink, but—it isn't," was the teasing reply.

"Is our yard as large as that one?" Jimmy pointed toward a large, grassy square they were passing.

"I don't know how large that yard is. I never measured it," was the sly answer.

"I think you're *awful* mean." Jimmy chuckled nevertheless.

On the back seat of the car John had been industriously trying to coax his mother to answer *his* questions about the new home. He had not succeeded any better than Jimmy. Junior wasn't at all curious about his new home. He was sitting far back on the seat, waving his short legs in the air and singing a long song about nothing.

There was not much tune to it and no words but there was plenty of noise. Junior was fond of this kind of singing.

“Oh, keep still, Junie. You are making a lot of racket,” John said crossly. He reached out and caught Junior by his sturdy legs as they kicked in mid-air.

“I aren’t. I singin’ a pretty song. Leggo my legs, Johnny.” Junior went on singing as loudly as he could.

“You only think you are,” John told him scornfully, releasing his little brother’s legs with a peevish jerk. John felt very sulky and out of sorts. He had a quick temper and was often impatient with Junior when he should have been gentle. He hated, too, to be crossed when he wanted his own way. He poutingly decided he would not speak to his mother again until they reached their new home. He was very quiet for the next five minutes, then he began to grow ashamed of himself. He brightened up and began playing with Junior who had grown tired of his song and was ready to be amused.

The car was now going north over a broad, smooth pike. There were not many houses to be seen and these houses were as large as castles.

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They were set far back on great, green lawns shaded by tall, beautiful trees.

There were a good many miles of country after they left the beautiful private estates behind. There were fields, white with daisies, golden with buttercups and sweet with fragrant red clover. Then came long stretches of green, hilly meadows where cows and sometimes a few horses were grazing; where the tops of red-roofed farm-houses could be seen from the road. All the way through this part of the country were the vegetable gardens; wide, brown fields with rows and rows of pale green plants. Some showed only a few inches above the earth, others were a foot high, or higher.

“ See the gardens! ” Jimmy called out to John. “ I wish we were at our house now so I could plant mine right away. Just look! Those plants are large and tall already and ours aren’t even planted yet.”

“ Those are early varieties of vegetables, Jimmy,” reassured his father. “ We’ll be in time enough for ours, if we hustle.”

“ Is the ground plowed? ” quizzed John.

“ Yes; the ground is plowed.”

“ How much —— ” began John.

"Never mind asking me any more questions. The main question now is to have our luncheon. It's after two o'clock and I'm getting hungry. I had only one plate of ice-cream and one piece of cake. You fellows had two. Now keep your eyes open. If you see a pretty spot along the way, sing out. We'll stop there and have a woodland picnic. I'll run the car slowly."

"Oh, goody!" John clapped his hands.

"I hope we've chicken sandwiches and sweet pickles and salted peanuts," was Jimmy's cry. "Tell you what, this is a great day. First, a party in the morning, then a picnic in the afternoon and a dandy long ride besides. I'd like to move to another place every day."

"Well, I *would not*," emphasized his mother as she began to rearrange the luggage in the bottom of the tonneau in order to get at the picnic hamper.

"When are we going to have our presents?" Jimmy next wanted to know.

"Not yet, but soon," was his mother's indefinite reply.

"What's the use of asking questions?" he said with a little snicker. "No one ever tells you a thing."

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“There’s a fine place!” John had been keeping a sharp lookout. They were almost to a wooden bridge. On the other side of the bridge and about a hundred feet back from it was a clump of willow trees overhanging a gurgling silvery brook. Under the trees the grass was short and thick.

“Right-o,” agreed Mr. Hopkins. “I can run the car down the side road that crosses the pike and it will be out of the way of other cars.”

Jimmy was first out of the car after it turned into the narrow but smooth side road. He was carrying the gift basket. He set the basket down on the grass and put both hands to his mouth, trumpet fashion. He roared through his hands in as big a voice as he could muster: “Here you are! Right this way! Visit the best picnic ground in the world!”

“Wow, wow, wow! Ya, ya, ya, y-a-a!” mimicked Junior, his hands to his mouth. “Here we are!” He ran past Jimmy and straight toward the brook.

“Ju-nio-r-r!” warned Mrs. Hopkins. “Come back. Mustn’t go near the brook. Quick, Jimmy! Run after him!”

Jimmy hurried after Junior who had already reached the edge of the shallow brook.

"Oh, see the funny fishy!" the little boy cried out. Before Jimmy could reach him he stooped, and, leaning far forward, tried to grab a minnow as it swam through the ripples. Splash! Junior dived into the brook on his hands and knees. His small hands slipped on the moss-green stones and he rolled over in the water with a yell.

"O-w-w-w!" It was not a wail of pain. It was a gleeful yell, and with it went a great spattering of water. "See, Jimmy! I are swimmin'. Lemme be." Junior began to wiggle and resist as Jimmy hauled him out of the shallows.

"*Alexander David Hopkins!*" cried his mother in her sternest voice. "*You naughty boy!*" She left the hamper she had begun to unpack and rushed down to the brook's edge. She gave Junior a severe little shake as she turned him about to see how wet his clothing was.

"He's wet all over," Jimmy informed her. "He rolled in the water, then he tried to swim."

"I'll have to undress you, Junie, and hang your clothes in the sun to dry. But what *will* you wear while they're drying?" Mrs. Hopkins glanced anxiously about her, then she laughed.

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She went over to the hamper and picked up the white damask lunch-cloth she had laid beside it. Next she sent Jimmy to ask Mr. Hopkins for the extra clean handkerchief he always carried.

She quickly removed Junior's dripping clothing and made the handkerchief do for a towel. Then she draped the lunch-cloth on him in folds, fastening it with safety pins from a needle and pin book she had in her hand-bag.

"There; that will have to do. You'll have to go barefooted until your slippers are dry. Go and sit *right down there*." She pointed to a spot near the hamper. "Stay there until I have luncheon ready."

"Te, he, he," snickered Jimmy, as Junior marched along in his snowy robe and sat meekly down. "He looks so funny. Like queer pictures of men in ladies' dresses that you see in books."

"What's the matter with Junie? Oh, ha, ha, ha!" John had been with his father while he parked the car. Now both of them began to laugh at Junior.

"He tried to catch a minnow and fell into the brook," Jimmy explained.

Mrs. Hopkins was busy hanging Junior's little

wet garments on some low bushes where the sun would strike them warmly and quickly dry them.

“He certainly has not been a good boy.” Mrs. Hopkins glanced severely at Junior, though she really wanted to laugh. “I told him to wait for me when we left the car, but he ran ahead. Then I told him to come back when he started for the brook, but he disobeyed Mother again. Now we must all stay here until Junie’s clothes are dry. We can’t take him into our nice car looking like that.”

Junior hung his head. He was ready to burst into tears. Then he saw John laughing at him and he changed his mind and laughed, too.

“His clothes will soon dry in this hot sun,” Mr. Hopkins said.

“Oh, yes, only he has our table-cloth for a robe,” smiled his mother, “so we’ll have to get along with paper napkins.”

She carpeted the soft grass thickly with blue-flowered paper napkins and the picnickers gathered about the woodland spread. Jimmy had his wish. There were chicken and ham sandwiches, salted peanuts, sweet pickles and olives and fat golden sponge cakes with thick, creamy icing. Besides there were the oranges and bananas they

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had bought at the market. The strawberries were to be kept for dinner that night. The boys had a large bottle of milk and their parents a thermos bottle of coffee.

Taffy and Sunshine were not forgotten. Mr. Hopkins brought their baskets down under the trees and pulled back the lids a little so as to give the imprisoned pussies more air. They had a small can of salmon between them served on two paper plates.

After luncheon Mrs. Hopkins said, "Now, boys, it's time to see what is in the gift basket. Here is a note from Marjorie which will tell us what we are to do." She took from her hand-bag a square envelope and opened it. The note read:

"DEAR JIMMY, JOHN AND JUNIE:

"You are not to touch the gift basket until you have had your lunch. You are to have your presents under the trees somewhere at your picnic. We know about the picnic now, but you won't know until you get to it. You are to sit on the grass, three in a row, and each draw a present. Your names are on the packages. If you get one that isn't for you, pass it on. Somebody will have to read Junie's for him. When all the bundles are out of the basket then start and open them. Take turns. We hope you will

like your presents and we give them to you with a great deal of good will. Good luck to you all and we will come out to see you as soon as we can."

The note was signed first by Marjorie, then below her name all the other children had signed.

The three Js, as their father sometimes called them, obediently sat down in a row on the grass, impatient to see what was in the packages. Altogether, there were four packages for each little brother and one apiece for Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins.

"Open one of your packages first," his mother directed Jimmy. "John, you come next and Junie last. He'll do better with his after he has seen you boys open yours."

Junior had not stopped to wait for John and Jimmy. He had the paper off his first present and was busy with the second. So there were only John and Jimmy to take turns.

Jimmy began by opening the smallest of his packages first. He found a pretty, daisy-shaped pen-wiper with black and red felt leaves. Later, John found one, too, only his was of black and bright blue felt. It took the two quite a while to open their largest packages. These were com-

posed of fold upon fold of wrapping paper. When at last they came down to the real presents, they were very small and turned out to be pocket-knives with two blades apiece and smooth green handles. Their other gifts were a game and a book apiece. Junior received a soft rubber ball with a splendid bounce to it, a set of picture blocks, a make-believe watch with bright red hands and a little red metal automobile that, when wound up, would run for a few feet by itself. Mrs. Hopkins' present was a bottle of violet toilet water and Mr. Hopkins' was three linen handkerchiefs, initialed with "H."

While the boys were playing with their gifts Mr. Hopkins cut some willow branches and made each of the three boys a willow whistle. Then a fine, noisy time began. It ended only when Mr. Hopkins looked at his watch and said it was later than he had thought and that they had better start at once. The hot sun had dried Junior's little blue linen suit and underclothing though it was rather stiff and wrinkled.

Soon the remainder of the picnic luncheon was repacked in the hamper and it and the cat-baskets were back in the automobile again. Mr. Hopkins called out, "All aboard! All aboard!" in a

deep voice and Jimmy and John raced for the car. Junior trotted behind them crying out, "Wait for me. Wait for me."

It did not take more than five minutes to get settled in the car again. Then they were on the pike once more, speeding away from the pretty brook and shady willow trees toward their new home and to new pleasures and adventures.

CHAPTER IV

HOME AT LAST

It was half-past six when Jimmy exclaimed, "Oh, see!" He half stood up in the seat and pointed. Straight ahead and through the spaces between trees he had caught sight of a sheet of sparkling blue water. "Is it a lake?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes, it's a lake," smiled his father. "The name of it is Rainbow Lake and the town we are going to live in is named Lakeview. We'll be home in fifteen minutes."

Mr. Hopkins had already turned from the road they had been using into a broad, smooth pike which ran parallel with the lake.

"Is it a big lake?" quizzed Jimmy. He was much excited over this new feature. "Is it deep? Can we fish and swim in it?"

"It's about five miles long and a mile wide. I don't know yet about the fishing and swimming. I'll have to find that out."

“How far do we live from the lake?” was Jimmy’s next question.

“About a mile. Now no more questions for a minute. I must see which way will bring us home the quickest.” He drove a little further along the pike, then swung the machine into a wide dirt street, shaded by thick-trunked maples.

Jimmy and John tried to see both sides of the street at once. They had been motoring through one town after another all day but they thought Lakeview was the nicest place they had yet seen. It had gray and white and yellow and dark green houses, mostly of wood, much as those of other towns they had seen, but somehow it was different, and nicer.

Mr. Hopkins turned the car into another dirt street, lined with slim, straight poplars. On the east side of this street were several houses, but on the west side there was only one. It was a large, square, dark green house with white trimmings and a wide veranda around two sides of it. It had a gravel drive at the left side that led to a dark green and white garage behind the house. Over the veranda climbed pink and red rambler roses just beginning to show blossoms. In the front yard were two straight, stiff catalpa trees

that looked like two green opened umbrellas. The house stood in the middle of a lawn as large as Jimmy and John could wish for. On the lawn were big trees and little trees, big bushes and little bushes. The right-hand side looked a little like a woods except that the grass was cut close and the bushes had been carefully trimmed.

"And is this *big, big* house and *big, big* yard all ours?" shrieked John unbelievably, as his father brought the car to a standstill before the house.

"It is." His father sprang from the machine and opened the door of the tonneau. "Welcome home, Mother. Welcome home, youngsters."

"Hurry up, Johnny. I want get down." Junior gave John a vigorous push forward. "This my house. Muvver said so."

"Oh, John, come here!" Jimmy had already disappeared around a corner of the house. His voice came back in a jubilant yell.

John scampered after him in a hurry. Junior hustled after John, stubbed his foot on a tuft of long grass and fell flat. He did not cry. He was a sturdy little fellow. He picked himself up with a half-chuckle and hastened on after his brothers.

What had caught Jimmy's eye was a wired-in piece of ground at the very end of the long back yard. In it were two wide-spreading apple trees and a couple of stocky peach trees. Part of the yard was dirt and part grass grown. At the back of it were three neat little open houses, painted dark green. Around the outside of the wire fence grew tangles of blackberry vines. They had already grown tall enough to poke their long, prickly, green tendrils over the top of the wire.

"This is a fine chicken yard; nicer than the one at Grandma's!" John exclaimed with deep satisfaction. "The chickens ought to feel proud of themselves to have such fancy houses."

"I hope we'll have a lot of chicks; some white ones, like those big ones at Grandma's. Maybe we'll have some turkeys, too. Isn't it all going to be great?" Jimmy's face glowed. "I'm glad we didn't know about any of it, aren't you?"

"Yes." John looked sober as he thought of how nearly he had come to spoiling his own pleasure.

"I wonder if that place away over there, all full of bushes, belongs to us? We'd better not go there unless we know. It looks far away for this lot." Jimmy gazed doubtfully at the thickly-

bushed stretch of ground considerably beyond the garage.

“Let’s go and ask Father. We’ll make him come out here and tell us about everything.” John started off, Jimmy at his heels.

Junior had meant to follow Jimmy and John but he never reached the chicken-yard. On the way he spied a large empty packing box close to the house. It stood on end and was tall enough so that he could stand up in it. He skipped into it and crowded close to one end. He thought it would be fun to jump out at John and Jimmy when they came back.

He waited quite a while and had to step in and out of his hiding-place about every two minutes to see if they were coming. At last he heard their voices near him. He made a big jump and flew out of the box crying, “Boo-oo-oo! Boo-woo!” But when he jumped he jostled the box and it fell over. It knocked him down and dropped over him.

“There, that’s what you get for trying to scare us,” teased John. “Now you can’t get out and we are going to leave you there for a while.”

“Ow-w-wow-wow!” yelled Junior. “I want to get out. Let me out, old naughty Johnny.”

"No, sir, I won't. You called me old naughty Johnny. Now you'll have to stay where you are."

"No-o-o-o-o!" Junior set up a loud wail. "You let me out, Jimmy."

"Stay still then so the box won't hurt you when I lift it," Jimmy ordered good-naturedly. He did not tease Junior as John was fond of doing. He raised the box and let the captive out from under it while John stood by and laughed.

"I don't like you, bad old Johnny." Junior scowled at John as he picked himself up from the grass. "I won't never play with you. Show me the chickens, Jimmy." He turned his back on John, who only laughed the harder.

"There aren't any yet, Junie. I'll show you the chicken-yard, though. Wait till we ask Daddy to come, too."

Just then Mr. Hopkins came out the back door. "So this is where you went," he said. "I thought maybe you didn't like your new house and wanted to run away from it. You gave it just one look and away you went."

"You're only funning. Course we like it. We were going to come after you when you came after us." John sidled up to his father. "Won't

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you please take us over there?" John pointed a finger at the green bushes.

"We were afraid they belonged to somebody else," Jimmy said when his father told the boys they were berry bushes and led the way around a large ploughed square of ground to them.

There were red raspberry and currant bushes and back of them an asparagus bed. Still back of the asparagus bed was a strawberry bed and here the lot belonging to the Hopkins ended on that side.

"How many chickens are we going to have, and when are we going to get them?" John asked.

"We'll have about sixty chickens. I've written to a man just outside Lakeview who has a chicken farm."

While they were walking toward the back door it opened and Mrs. Hopkins called out, "Boys, you ought to come now if you want to see the house inside before dinner. Besides I need Father to help me."

Mr. Hopkins took firm hold of Junior's hand and raced him across the grass to the house. John and Jimmy ran behind them. The whole four landed in the kitchen in a bunch. Mr. Hop-

kins was at once set to work opening a can of baked beans and one of peas. The boys ran off to see the house.

The moving men had set the large pieces of furniture in place and the rugs had been laid. This made the rooms look homelike even if a great deal of the smaller furniture was not yet arranged. The boys poked their noses into the living-room first. It was a square, pleasant apartment with many windows. There was a new blue velvet rug on the floor which exactly matched the blue wall-paper.

Back of the living-room was a smaller room which was to be used as a library. The Hopkins' bookcases already lined the pale brown walls. The brown velvet rug, carved walnut library table and big leather chairs were in place, too. Both rooms opened into a wide center hall which went straight to the kitchen. Across this hall was a parlor with a bow window and back of it the dining-room.

The young explorers went through the downstairs hastily and rushed up-stairs with a great clatter of feet. The very first room they peeped into at the head of the stairs was their own. It was large and airy with a creamy-tinted wall-pa-

per, bordered with pink roses and daisies. On one side were John's and Jimmy's white twin beds. Across from them was Junior's little blue wicker bed. Their crex rug with its wide blue border was on the floor, and their chiffoniers against the wall, but their smaller belongings were still missing.

"Let's go up in the attic before it gets dark." John was impatient to go on.

They had to hunt a little bit for the attic door which at first they mistook for a closet door. Up the short, steep flight they pounded, Junior stumbling along behind them. The attic in their other house had been small and always rather dark. In the winter it was too cold to play in and in the summer too hot.

But this attic! The two older boys exclaimed with delight. It was large and square and the ceiling quite high. It was papered, too, with a white-striped paper. It had four windows with window-seats and the floor was smooth enough to slide on.

"Here's lots of room to play show or anything we want to," Jimmy rejoiced.

"Whee!" John took a jubilant slide across the smooth floor.

Junior imitated him. His small slippered feet flew out from under him and he landed on his back, bumping his head smartly on the hard floor. This time he cried and made a good deal of noise about it. He lay on the floor and wailed loudly.

“Oh, get up, Junie, and stop crying. You’re an awful little cry-baby. Give me your hand. I’ll help you get up.”

“I aren’t a cry-baby. We-e-e-e.” Junior squealed like a little pig and kicked out both feet at John.

John dodged the flying feet and tried to catch hold of his small, angry brother. Junior kicked harder than ever. His feet landed squarely against one of John’s knees.

“Ouch!” John exclaimed angrily. Then he pounced down upon Junior and dragged him to his feet. He gave Junior a hard slap on the back. “That’s what you get for kicking me,” he sputtered.

The blow did not hurt Junior much, but it made him angrier than ever. He fairly roared at John and flew at him like a little hurricane. He pounded John with both of his baby fists. John caught him by the arms. He was now as much out of temper as Junior.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROMISE

IN the midst of the uproar Mr. Hopkins called up from the foot of the attic stairs, "Boys, what is the matter up there?"

John loosed his hold on Junior's arms so suddenly that Junior sat down on the floor. He did not cry any more, but sat and looked at John with such a cross face that both John and Jimmy had to laugh.

"Junior fell down, and"—John had started to answer his father—"then I ——" He stopped.

"And then you what?" came the crisp question.

"Called him a cry-baby," John went on. "He kicked me and I hit him and then he got mad and hit me some more and ——"

"Hm-m-m. Come down to dinner, all three of you." Mr. Hopkins turned and went down the stairs.

"Now Father will give us a scolding when we

get to the table," Jimmy said in a worried tone. "You oughtn't tease Junie and call him names. He always flies at you when you say 'cry-baby.' It makes him have a temper and Mother's trying to break him of it. He's only a baby."

"Don't care. It was his fault," grumbled John. "He kicked me." John started ahead down the attic stairs, purposely clumping his feet as he went.

"Come on, Junie." Jimmy took the little boy by the hand and piloted him down the steep stairs.

When the three entered the dining-room they all looked rather guilty. Jimmy flushed to his ears as he met his father's keen glance. He was not to blame in the squabble, but he did not intend to say so.

"You sit there, John; and Jimmy there; and Junior here." Mrs. Hopkins did not smile as she directed the boys where to sit. They slid into their chairs very quietly.

Junior instantly forgot how sober his mamma and papa looked as he caught sight of the golden brown omelet. "Want some of that," he pointed a pudgy finger at the omelet. "I are hungry."

"Just a minute, Son. Before we eat Father

has to talk to three little boys who can't get along in a nice new home without quarreling."

Junior ducked his head and wriggled down in his chair until his head was just on a level with the table.

"Oh, I guess it was all my fault," John broke in. "If I hadn't called Junie a cry-baby he wouldn't have kicked me, and then I wouldn't have hit him."

"Were you and Jimmy teasing Junior?" asked Mrs. Hopkins. "You know I have told you you must not, and why."

"Jimmy wasn't saying a word. Junie fell down and began to yell. I said he was a cry-baby." John went on with a truthful account of the squabble.

"Did it make you feel better to treat Junior as you did?" Mr. Hopkins looked steadily at John.

"No-o, it didn't," John stammered, very red and shamefaced.

"Then don't do such things," was the stern reproof. "You are five years older than Junior and Jimmy is six. Both of you are too old to quarrel with him. I want him to grow up with you boys. I expect you to look after him and

set him a good example. Jimmy never has much trouble with him. It is always you, John, who doesn't get along with Junie. How does it happen?"

"I—don't—know. It just does," John said reluctantly. "I—I forget and tease him sometimes. Then he gets mad and goes for me."

"Ah; that's just it. You tease him. And how many times have you been told not to tease him?"

"A good many," John owned up.

"Well, I'll remind you of it once more. Another time and I shall punish you, not only for teasing Junior, but for disobeying orders."

Mr. Hopkins turned to Junior who was still practicing a disappearing act under the table. "Sit up straight in your chair, Junior," he said briskly in a tone that brought Junior's yellow head above the table in a hurry. "Now listen to Father. You are not to kick and strike John ever again. If he teases you you must put your hands behind your back and walk away from him. Do you understand me?"

"Ye-as." Junior slid about in his chair, but nodded his head vigorously. His round blue eyes were fixed hungrily on the omelet.

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"All right. Don't forget." Mr. Hopkins at once occupied himself with serving the dinner. When he lectured his boys he said not much, but what he said counted.

"I saw a house to-day that was named 'Shady-lane Bungalow' and another that had 'Cosy Corner' over the front porch in white letters," Jimmy suddenly broke the silence that had followed his father's rebuke. As he had not been guilty he had not taken the lecture to himself. "Wouldn't it be fine to have a name for our house?"

"Those houses you saw with signs were probably boarding-houses," his mother told him. "From what I heard up in the attic this evening I am afraid we'd have to name our house 'Cross-patch Castle.' You surely wouldn't care to have that name over our door."

"Of course not," Jimmy returned hastily. "I'd like it to be a nice name—one that would mean we liked our new home. I guess I wouldn't want the name over the door. I'd like it to be a name just for our family. I can't think of a good one, though."

"Ho; I can think of lots of names," boasted John. He soon found he could not. Every

one he proposed was either too long or not suitable.

As the boys ate their dinner they kept on trying to think of a good name for the house. Jimmy said over and over again that it must be a name that would mean happiness.

“It has to be one that shows we’re having a good time in our home all the time. That home’s a happy place.”

They thought of “Good Times House,” “Pleasant House,” “Lovely House” and “Beautiful Home.” They did not like any of these.

Junior caught the word “happy” from hearing Jimmy repeat it with so much emphasis. “Happy, happy, happy,” he warbled, beating time on the edge of his plate with his spoon. “I happy. I like here in this house. This are a happy house, Muvver. Please give me some more milk.”

“Why-ee!” Jimmy’s eyes opened wide. “What Junie just said would be the best name of all—‘Happy House.’ I kept saying ‘happy,’ but I didn’t say it and ‘house’ together. Isn’t that a nice name, Mother and Father? Can’t we call our house that?”

“Don’t you believe it might be a hard name to live up to?” asked his father, trying not to smile.

“I’d try to make it like its name,” was Jimmy’s pleading reply.

“Yes, I think *you* would. I am not so sure of John. Even Junie would have to do his part toward keeping it a happy house.” Mr. Hopkins glanced at Junior who was getting ready to go to sleep over his strawberries. “I’ll have a talk with him to-morrow and try to make him understand.”

Junior did not look toward his father. His eyelids were drooping lower and lower. Very slowly he steered a spoonful of strawberries toward his left eye instead of his mouth.

“I won’t have any more fusses with Junie. See if I do,” John declared airily. “It’s easy not to, if you just keep thinking you’re not going to every once in a while.”

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll wait two weeks before we name the house,” proposed their father. “During those two weeks we must all try to be as cheerful and kind to each other as we can. If we do our best to be happy by just being good we’ll have earned the right to call our house

‘Happy House.’ If we don’t do our best, then we’ll have to go on longer to earn our name. Now remember”—he leveled a sudden finger at the drowsing Junior, who sat up and blinked, then at John and Jimmy—“that means you—and you—and you.”

CHAPTER VI

UP WITH THE SUN

“ I HOPE I wake up good and early to-morrow morning,” John yawned to Jimmy as the two boys made ready for bed. It was hardly nine o’clock but they were glad of this early bed-time. “ How can I wake up myself? ”

“ If you go to bed thinking and thinking until you drop to sleep that you want to get up when the sun does, maybe you will,” Jimmy sleepily suggested.

It was Jimmy who first opened his eyes the next morning. The round, red sun was just coming up from behind a fringe of far-away trees, turning the white fluffy clouds banked around it to a pale sea-shell pink. Suddenly remembering that John wanted very much to get up early, Jimmy tiptoed to his brother’s bed. He bent down, put his lips close to John’s ear and hallooed, “ I want to get up when the sun does.”

“ Ha! ” John gave a kind of shriek and

popped up from his bed like a Jack-in-the-box. "Wh-a-t? U-m-m-m." He sat on the edge of the bed blinking his eyes and wrinkling his nose. "Did I wake up by myself?"

"Course you didn't." Jimmy was still laughing at the way John had shot up from the bed. "I yelled in your ear. See; there's the sun just coming up. I was sure Junie would wake up, too, but he didn't. Let's hurry and wash and dress and go outdoors a while before breakfast."

Jimmy waited only long enough to see that John was thoroughly awake, then he took his bath towel and ran to the bathroom for his morning scrub. John soon followed him. It was not long before the two were racing across the ground to the brown garden square.

"This is the place I'd like to have for my garden." Jimmy waved an arm toward the upper western corner of chocolate-colored earth.

"Oh, no; I want that," objected John. "I like that corner best of all."

"I spoke first for it," was Jimmy's rather sharp reminder. Then he stopped. He was remembering what his father had said last night. "Well, I don't mind taking that other corner

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down there," he said, his face clearing. "Maybe Father won't want either of us to have it."

"Oh, I don't care so much which corner I have." John had remembered, too. He was not to be outdone by Jimmy. "Let's go and look at the strawberry bed. Father said the strawberries would be real ripe in another two weeks. We might find one that was ripe already."

Away they went on a hunt for a ripe berry. They peered very earnestly under the bright green leaves and would have been highly joyful if they had found a berry that was turning red. There were plenty of green ones, some of fair size, but it would take fully two more weeks of sun and winds and soft spring rains to turn even the largest ones red.

The two happy little explorers went on to the raspberry bushes which were getting ready to blossom. Here they crowed joyfully over the "loads" of raspberries they would have. From there they paid a visit to the empty chicken houses, and met with an early morning surprise. One of the little open houses still had several light wooden boxes nailed around the inside. These had served as nests for the hens. In one of

them a very large and odd-looking chicken was now roosting.

“Oh, te, he, he,” chuckled John. “You’re a funny kind of an old hen, Sunny Sunshine.”

“Look! There’s Taffy in the peach tree.” Jimmy pointed to where Taffy was gracefully stretched out on a lower limb of the tree. “They’re right at home and not a bit scared. They won’t know what to think of the chickens. Maybe they’ll think the chicks are birds and go after them. You’ll have to be good, Sunny, you and Taffy, and not chase the chickens,” Jimmy told Sunshine, stroking his silky back.

“Boys! Jimmy—John-ny.” It was their mother’s voice from the house. “Breakfast! Hurry!”

“Race you to the house. One, two, three, go!” Jimmy was off as the “go” left his lips. He reached the house about two feet ahead of John. The pair rushed up the steps and burst into the kitchen, full of early morning elation.

“Good-morning, Daddy. We beat you getting up this morning,” Jimmy said, as he and John entered the dining-room and found his father at table waiting for the others.

“ You mean you were the alarm clock that woke us up,” laughed Mr. Hopkins.

Jimmy opened surprised eyes, then he grinned sheepishly. “ I was only waking John up. I didn’t think I made so much noise. We’ve been all around the place. The strawberries will soon be ripe, oceans of ’em. Are those green things sticking quite high out of the ground asparagus? Are they good to eat now? ”

“ They are, and we are going to have some for dinner to-night,” answered his mother who was just entering the dining-room with a platter of bacon and eggs.

“ Do we have to go to school any more this spring? ” John asked anxiously.

“ No; the school here will close within a week or two, so you’ll have that much vacation extra. I thought you’d like to be at home while I’m here, so Mother and I decided to let you off on school.”

Mr. Hopkins was a traveling salesman for a large manufacturing house. Each year he had a six weeks’ summer vacation, usually the last two weeks of July and all of August. This year he had taken his vacation earlier so as to move and settle his family in Lakeview.

“ Hurrah! ” cried Jimmy. “ I’m glad we don’t have to go to school.”

“ So am I,” echoed John. “ What are we going to do first to-day, Daddy? ”

“ Let me see. We might drive over to the poultry farm this morning and pick out our chicks. On the way back Mother wishes to do the marketing and I must hunt a hardware store. I need nails, screws, wire and a lot of such useful odds and ends.”

Jimmy and John were so impatient to be off on the ride they could hardly wait to finish breakfast. Hastily asking to be excused they rushed off to the garage. Mr. Hopkins had been there before them so it was unlocked and open. Jimmy climbed to the driver’s seat of the automobile in a twinkling and ran the car out onto the drive. His father had been teaching him to handle the wheel and he drove very well.

“ All aboard! All aboard! ” he shouted in his deepest voice as he brought the car to a stop before the side entrance of the house. “ Fast express for Lakeview. Passengers please have your tickets ready! ”

The chicken farm to which they were going was about two miles from Lakeview, but in an

opposite direction from Rainbow Lake. By the time they reached it the sun was well up in the clear blue sky and shone warmly down upon them. The farmhouse stood quite a distance back from the pike and was reached by a private road. It was an old-fashioned gray house with a red roof and a cupola. It stood in the middle of a sloping lawn planted thickly with trees and shrubs. Before they came to it they could see the bright stretches of wire behind it and the rows of small gray buildings, each with its red roof.

Mr. Hopkins stopped the car on the drive opposite a long side veranda where a man sat reading a newspaper. "Good-morning," he called out. "Are you Mr. Ingram?"

The man had dropped his paper and was coming across the grass when Mr. Hopkins spoke. He was tall and stout and wore a kind of yellowish-colored linen suit and a broad-brimmed Panama hat. He had curly gray hair, a round red face and twinkling blue eyes.

"Good-day," he answered in a large, hearty voice. "Yes, I'm Ingram. Are you the Mr. Hopkins who wrote me about those chickens? I was looking for you this morning."

The two men shook hands and Mr. Hopkins

introduced the chicken fancier to his wife and the boys. Then they got out of the car and went with the chicken man to see the wonders of the big farm.

As they went along past row after row of wired-in squares, the boys saw enough to keep them constantly exclaiming, "Oh, look at this! See those chickens over there! Oh, Daddy, buy some of that kind!" Some of the parks had shade trees. Under a big apple tree in one park the boys saw a man digging up the earth with a spade. Around him stood a solemn circle of chickens watching his every movement.

"What's he doing? Is he going to bury something?" John and Jimmy asked almost in the same breath.

"Nope. He's only digging up the ground so the chickens can pick it over," Mr. Ingram told them. "They know he's doing it for their benefit. That's why they're watching him so closely. Can't fool those hens. They know."

Mr. Hopkins picked out about sixty-five chickens of the best breeds. Among them were the white ones that Jimmy admired and the bronze-browns that John liked. Junior took a fancy to a large gray rooster with an especially brilliant

red comb, and his father bought the rooster just to please the little boy. When it lifted its scarlet head and crowed loudly two or three times, Junior was enchanted. He clapped his hands in glee and tried to crow, too.

“What are you going to call your rooster, Junie?” Jimmy asked when at last they were on the road home from the farm.

“Cock-a-doodle-doo,” Junior instantly said.

“*That’s* not a name, Junie. *That’s* only what the rooster says when he crows.”

“He *are* a cock-a-doodle-doo,” Junior persisted. “He are a doodle bird, Jimmy. I can play with him and have fun.”

“I guess his name must be Doodle,” chuckled Jimmy.

“Yes; Doodle.” Junior wagged his head in approval. So the stately, handsome rooster, that was to become one of Junior’s most valued playmates, was named Doodle.

CHAPTER VII

DICK

THE hardware store was the next stop the Hopkins made.

“Why, *that’s* an ice-cream place!” Jimmy cried as his father stopped the car in front of an old white house with a veranda around two sides of it. A long flight of steps led up to the veranda and on the veranda were a number of small tables and chairs.

Jimmy and John thought it was a queer kind of hardware store but very interesting. It seemed to be crowded full of a little of everything. The floor was pretty well covered with washtubs, boilers, granite and tin ware, gas and oil stoves, piles of dishes, baskets and all the most necessary articles for housekeeping. The counters had rows and rows of boxes of nails, screws and fixtures, but the shelves were full of toys, stationery and school supplies. There was a newspaper and magazine stand, too, and a row

of ice-cream freezers. There was even a row of candy jars and a glass showcase filled with different kinds of chocolates.

Junior had caught sight of a crisp, pale brown cone which a woman was filling with pink ice-cream for a small girl. He was circling the ice-cream counter on his toes, chanting, "Muvver, you please give me some ice-cream. Muvver, I want two cones; one strawb'rry and one choklit."

He teetered up and down with impatience until the coveted cones were placed in his hands, then ran off to the veranda and sat down on the steps in the sunshine.

John and Jimmy and their mother sat at one of the veranda tables for their cream. Mr. Hopkins didn't want any. He was far too busy sorting out different sizes of screws and nails from the boxes on a counter. As soon as the boys had finished the ice-cream they went back into the store for another look around it.

While they were poking about, talking together in low voices a boy came walking into the store. He was about as tall as Jimmy, but thinner. He was bareheaded and his thick brown hair curled tight to his head. His eyes were bright blue and his face was covered with

freckles. As he walked past John and Jimmy he gave them a quick, bright look out of his blue eyes, then smiled a little. In a second he had disappeared through a door at the back of the store.

“He must live here.” John had watched the boy out of sight. “Didn’t he have a lot of freckles, though? He’s about as old as we are, I guess.”

“He looked like a nice boy; not cranky or mean, you know. Probably we won’t know him until we go to school next fall. That’s when we’ll begin to know the fellows. It’s a good thing you and I have each other to go around with this summer.”

While Jimmy was saying this the curly-haired, freckle-faced boy came back into the store again. He strolled along until he came directly opposite to John and Jimmy.

“Hello,” he said after a minute in a friendly voice. “How do you like our store?”

“Hello,” John and Jimmy said together.

“It’s a fine store.” Jimmy returned the boy’s smile. “What a lot of different things you have in it.”

“My father says it’s a junk shop.” The boy

laughed outright, a funny, merry laugh, and glanced about him with a comical air. "I guess it is, too. He has to sell a lot of stuff that isn't hardware because folks come in and ask for it and think his store's no good if he doesn't keep what they want. Sometimes I have to stay in on Saturdays and help straighten up things. Do I like that? Oh, no! Would I rather go swimming? Ask me." His whole face lighted up roguishly.

"Where do you go swimming?" John asked eagerly.

"Down to the lake. Some of the big fellows have a spring-board there and they let those of us kids who are good divers use it. You have to be a real swimmer. The water's deep."

"How deep is it at the spring-board? Isn't there any other place in the lake along near the shore that isn't very deep?" quizzed John.

"It's about twelve feet deep at the board, but it's over your head all along the shore. There's a creek 'bout a mile from here where the little kids go swimming."

Both the Hopkins boys' faces fell at Dick's answer. They were fairly sure their father would not let them go swimming in the lake.

"I can swim eight different ways," Dick proudly boasted, "and I can go as fast as—as—anything through the water."

"Jimmy and I can both swim fine." John was not to be kept in the background. "We can swim different ways, too. My father taught us to swim when we were little bits of boys. We learned at the seashore."

"That's fine. I'll take you swimming some day," offered the other boy, his eyes sparkling at the information. "Say, you just came here to live, didn't you? I never saw you before and I know every fellow in Lakeview."

"Yes, we came yesterday and we live in a big green house over that way. I forgot to ask my father the name of the street we live on," Jimmy returned.

"Oh, I know where *that* house is. Mr. Burns used to live there. He didn't like me very well." The boy gave a little laugh. "I put a ticktack on his window last Hallowe'en. I was hiding under the window and all of a sudden he raised it and leaned out and saw me before I could duck and run. He said I was a very mis-chee-vous boy. That's the way he said it."

John and Jimmy laughed.

"My name's Dick," he went on briskly. "Course it's really Richard Grant Carter, but everybody who knows me says Dick or Dickie. Now go ahead and tell me your names."

"Mine's James Arthur Hopkins and his is John Edward Hopkins. He's ten and I'm eleven. How old are you and what grade are you in at school?" Jimmy had made up his mind that he was going to like Dick.

"I'm twelve. I'm in Seventh A. I'm going to be promoted when school closes to Eighth B. Our school closes next Friday. I went to school this morning but I got excused early to do an errand for my mother."

"We're not going to school until next fall. We're glad of it," broke in John. "We are going to make a garden and take care of a lot of chickens we bought this morning at the chicken farm."

"We've had chickens and a garden ever since I was a baby, so I'm not crazy about them. I'd rather have a good time swimming or at the movies than pull weeds in a garden and feed chickens," Dick said frankly.

"Well, we've always lived in a big city where we couldn't have a garden or chickens. That's

why we think it will be fine to have them." Jimmy spoke with enthusiasm.

"Anyway, you can play some of the time," argued Dick. "I'll be around to see you in a few days; maybe after school or on Saturday. I have to go now. My mother's writing a note. I have to take it. Guess it's done by this time. Good-bye. I'll see you again." He started off, hands in his pockets.

"Come up to our house soon," Jimmy called after Dick. Dick nodded over one shoulder as he disappeared through the half-open door.

"He's a nice fellow, even if he is mis-chee-vous." Jimmy mimicked Dick's pronunciation of the word. "I believe he'd play fair in games and not want to have his own way all the time."

"I don't think he'd get mad at every little thing," John said positively. "I hate to play with a boy who's always getting mad."

They were still talking about Dick when their father called to them that he was ready to go. Mrs. Hopkins and Junior were out on the veranda. They all got into the car again and Mr. Hopkins drove to a grocery and meat store. This time John and Jimmy stayed in the car

while their father, mother and Junior went into the store.

Presently Mr. Hopkins came out of the grocery carrying a wooden box filled with packages. A clerk walked beside him with another box of groceries. Junior marched along ahead, a package of cereal under each arm.

On the way home John began telling his father about Dick and of how he went swimming in the lake. "He says he'll take Jimmy and me swimming when school's out," John ventured. "Can't we go, if we swim where the water isn't very deep?"

"No, sir." His father's tones were very decided. "You are not to go near the lake with this Dick, or with anyone but myself. You boys aren't strong enough swimmers to be trusted in deep water unless I am with you."

"Can we go down and just see the lake by ourselves; only walk along the shore?" John asked coaxingly.

"No; you are to keep away from the lake," was the stern reply. "Now remember that, John."

"But Dick ——"

"Never mind about Dick. I'm not sure that

I care to have you boys play with this boy who seems to do about as he pleases.”

“Can’t we have him come to see us?” John looked alarmed. He wished he hadn’t said anything about Dick. “We asked him to and he said he would.”

“Yes; he may come to see you *once*. Your mother and I can then judge if he’s the right sort of playmate for you and Jimmy. If we decide that he isn’t—then you are to keep away from him, too.”

CHAPTER VIII

A BUSY DAY

“ARE we going to plant our gardens this afternoon?” Jimmy asked his father at luncheon. He was impatient to start his garden.

“No; I’m sorry, but I’ve too many other things to do inside the house,” Mr. Hopkins said regretfully. “Besides I must drive down to the station to meet the three-thirty train. Netta’s coming on that. We’ll make an early start at the gardens in the morning. The sooner they are planted the better. You may go with me to the station.”

“You boys had better unpack those boxes that hold your books and playthings,” advised their mother. “Those you don’t want to use take up to the attic.”

John and Jimmy would have preferred running about outdoors, but they went at the task of unpacking their books and toys cheerfully

enough. Junior kindly offered to help them. After he had fallen down five steps of the attic stairs, pounded his thumb with a hammer, almost stood on his head while diving into a deep box to see what it held, managed to get in the way every two minutes and wound up by spattering himself from head to heels with a can of white paint which he found in the bathroom, he was whisked away by his mother for his afternoon nap.

"I'm glad Junie's gone to take his nap," sighed John thankfully. "I tried not to get mad at him, but he's about forty-three times as mischee-vous as Dick. I wish I hadn't said anything to Daddy about Dick and going down to the lake."

"I *knew* Daddy wouldn't let us go swimming in the lake with Dick," Jimmy returned wisely. "I think Dick is all right. Maybe his folks don't think it's anything much for him to go swimming in such deep water. I'd rather go swimming with Daddy along. Lots of times a crowd of boys go swimming by themselves and one of 'em is drowned."

"Ho, we would never get drowned," scoffed John. "We know how to swim."

“ Yes, but if you got a cramp you might drown even if you were a good swimmer. I think ——”

“ Boys!” Mr. Hopkins’ voice interrupted from the down-stairs hall.

“ Ready!” They left the remainder of the books piled on the floor and hustled down-stairs. They caught up with Mr. Hopkins just as he reached the car which was standing on the drive.

This time the front seat was Jimmy’s. John sat on one of the little seats in the tonneau where he could lean forward and talk to the two in front. The train was on time and Netta stepped off it, a suitcase in each hand, her red-cheeked Irish face all smiles.

Both boys piled into the back of the car with Netta. They were anxious to tell her about the new home and to hear from her what Tipperary, her pet dog, had been doing. Tipperary was an Irish setter; as much Irish as Netta. He could count to six by barking, could sit up, shake hands, play dead, pretend to walk lame, carry packages and do many other clever tricks. Netta had once brought him to the Hopkins’ house in the city for a day, so the boys felt as though Tipperary belonged a little bit to them, too.

“ It’s a foine time yez will be havin’ wid run-

nin' in the fields and diggin' in the garden," Netta declared heartily. "An' Joonyer will be growin' like a weed."

"You'll have a good time, too, Netta," Jimmy told her. "Your room is nicer than the one you had in the city, and we're going to have lots of fruit pretty soon and asparagus for supper and maybe Tipperary can come out here this summer for a while."

"An' them two fat Zoo cats would be scratchin' me poor Tip, I'm afraid," laughed Netta. "Sure, they'll roam through the grass and grow big as a couple of taggers. Tip would be enj'y-ing of hissself out here. I'll be tellin' yez now about him for when I get to the house I'll have no more time. It's your ma'll be needin' me."

She delighted the boys by telling them how Tip had brought a little wooden horse on wheels into the house and laid it in her lap.

"Would yez believe it?" she cried. "An' it was all along the street, Dinny, me nephew, has to go with the little wooden horse to see who owns it. Poor Tip! He was waggin' of his tail tickled as could be that he was makin' me a prisent!"

"Tip is about the smartest dog in the world,"

was John's opinion. "The only present Sunshine ever brought us was an old dead rat."

Netta finished telling them this funny trick of Tip's just as the car turned into the Hopkins' drive. Mrs. Hopkins was seated on the veranda and Netta promptly forgot John and Jimmy and hurried from the car and into the house with her mistress, expressing loud, Irish admiration of everything as she went.

By this time Junior had finished his nap and come out to the chicken-yard where his father and the boys were preparing for the arrival of the chickens. He hustled about gathering up stray pieces of broken-up boxes and singing at the top of his voice, "Doodle, Doodle, Doodle! Doodle's comin' to-morrow! I are goin' to make a house for Doodle!"

He stuck the ragged pieces of light board into the ground and made a funny, uneven square of them, then laid some larger pieces on top for a roof. As fast as he put the roof on it fell off again.

"Ho, ho!" John exclaimed. "The first time Doodle goes near that house it'll fall down. Let *me* show you how to make the roof stay on."

Junior flashed John a quick look of suspicion.

When he saw that John was not trying to tease him he let his brother sit down beside him. John managed to wedge two crosspieces at the corners so that they would remain firm. He then placed some other bits of wood over them in such way that they did not slide off.

Junior was noisily pleased with Doodle's new house. "You are a nice, good boy to-day, Johnny!" He pranced gleefully around the crooked little shack. "To-morrow I goin' to put Doodle in his house."

"You can't keep him there, Junie," Jimmy told the little boy. "Doodle will want to run and scratch in the ground for worms just the same as the other chickens. I don't believe he could more than stand up in that house."

"I goin' to tie a string on him," Junior declared. "I goin' to lead him around and around."

"Maybe," laughed Jimmy. "Poor Doodle! I guess he'll wish he was back at the chicken farm."

Before dinner that night the three Js had a spirited game of tag out on the lawn. It was mostly to please Junior. John and Jimmy would "tag" him on the shoulder and say, "Tag;

you're it." They would pretend to run very fast, but they managed to get near enough to him occasionally to allow him to "tag" them. It was John who had proposed playing tag. He was really trying hard to do his part toward naming the house. Junior understood, too, that he must not get cross with John. His mother had talked to him about it and he had looked quite solemn.

"Oh, dear, I'm so sle-e-py! Oh, m-y!" yawned Jimmy as he and John went up-stairs to bed shortly after nine o'clock. "We've had *such* a fine time to-day, and to-morrow's going to be better than ever."

"I'm sleepier'n I ever was in my life before," John returned with the companion yawn to Jimmy's. "I didn't fight once with Junie to-day—not the least little bit of a fuss. I didn't try much, either. I won't ever have any more fights with him. Anyway, I'm too big to get mad at such a little boy."

"You — might — have — one — some day," Jimmy warned between yawns as he drowsily fumbled the buttons on the coat of his pajamas.

"No, sir-ee!" emphasized John.

And that was the last word said that night.

Jimmy tumbled into bed and went instantly to sleep and John followed him to slumberland not more than two minutes after.

CHAPTER IX

DOODLE

NEXT day brought the chickens. The three Js spent the greater part of the morning in the chicken-yard getting acquainted with the clucking hens and the high-stepping, scarlet-combed roosters.

Junior immediately began Doodle's training. He pursued the frightened, squawking rooster with outspread arms and lusty shouts of "Come, Doodle, Doodle, Doodle!" Poor Doodle did not know what to make of such a boisterous reception and ran for his life. The other chickens ran and squawked, too, and the whole yard was soon in an uproar.

"You catch him, Jimmy," Junior finally appealed to his brother after he had run until he was tired and Doodle still kept out of his reach. John and Jimmy were both laughing at the frantic race between Junior and the big rooster. "I want to pet him. He are my chicken."

“You can’t pet him *yet*, goosie,” John said. “You’ll have to wait until he’s been in the chicken park a long time. Then maybe he’ll run away just the same. He doesn’t know his name’s Doodle.”

“But I want to hold him.” Junior was ready to cry. “I are goin’ to put him in his new house.”

“Oh, you mustn’t try to put him in that—ahem—house,” Jimmy snickered, “for months. I wouldn’t tie a string on him, Junie. You must try to tame him. Make him like you and then he will come when you call him.”

“How?” Junior was not clear as to how he might charm Doodle into tameness.

“I don’t know.” Jimmy stood and thought for a minute. “Oh, wait a second! I’ll show you something, Junie.” Seized with a bright idea he started for the house at a run. He was gone about five minutes. When he came back he was carrying a large round pan filled with yellow corn. On top of it was a little empty pan.

“This is the way to do, Junie.” Jimmy dipped the little pan into the corn and handed it full to Junior. “Take the pan and walk slowly over near where Doodle is now. When you get quite close to him, say, ‘Here, Doodle,’ not loud,

though, and scatter a little corn right in front of him. Then wait till he eats it, and walk along. See if he won't follow you."

"Yes, and so will all the other chickens," predicted John. "Look at them already."

The chickens had come running from all corners of the park, heads up, their bright eyes fixed on the corn pans. Doodle had left off telling his troubles to a crowd of his friends and begun stepping warily toward the very person he had just run from. Junior, with a pan of corn, was altogether different from that small, wild boy who had run and flapped and yelled at him. Doodle grew bold and went so close to Junior he could have reached out and touched him.

With a chuckle of triumph Junior flung a handful of corn squarely in front of the rooster.

"Keep on giving him corn, Junie," Jimmy directed. "I'm going to call the other chicks over here." Jimmy began: "Here, chick, chick, chick!" He scattered large handfuls of corn on the ground and most of the flock left Junior and rushed after him. Doodle seemed to know when he was well off. Junior had dumped about half of his pan of corn in a heap in front of his new pet. Doodle and a select group of his friends

gathered about the corn heap and had a party. When Junior's little pan was empty he wanted to refill it from Jimmy's, but Jimmy had given all his corn out, too.

"Wait until late this afternoon," Jimmy told him, "then you can feed Doodle again. The chickens have had as much corn as they need now. If you fed Doodle all he'd eat he'd be so fat pretty soon he couldn't walk."

"Yes, and don't try to catch him, Junie," cautioned John. "If you feed him twice a day, he will soon get to know you. Maybe he'll let you pet him sometime."

"To-morrow?" Junior asked hopefully.

"No, course not. Maybe not for two weeks or a month. You can tell when he gets over being afraid of you. You mustn't yell at him and spread out your arms, either."

Junior looked disappointed but said, "I don't scare Doodle any more."

"We'll start our planting this afternoon, boys," was the welcome news Mr. Hopkins gave out at luncheon that day. "I want each of you to see what good farmers you can be this summer. Even Junior must have a garden."

Directly after luncheon Mr. Hopkins took

stakes, tough string and a heavy wooden mallet and went out with his boys to the brown plowed square. Jimmy got the upper corner space he had wished for, and John the lower one on the same side. The two boys had the whole side between them. Their father measured off an even half for each and staked it.

"There," he said, when the boys had helped him complete the task, "now we'll see which of you can win a prize growing vegetables."

"What kind of prize?" John quizzed. "Do you mean you'll give us one?"

"Yes. I shan't tell you what it will be, though. I don't know yet myself. I'll make it something you both want. But you'll have to keep your gardens in A number 1 shape to win it."

The other half of the plowed square was divided into three parts. Half of it was for the family garden and the remainder was divided into two smaller spaces, one for the growing of dahlias and a little garden plot for Junior. Junior had watched his father briefly, found the staking off not interesting and trotted over to the chicken-house for a look at his idolized Doodle.

"We can't begin to finish our planting to-

day," Mr. Hopkins said, as the three sat on the top step of the shady back porch while he sorted packages of seeds from a square pasteboard box he held on his lap. He called out the names of the vegetables as he sorted and gave John and Jimmy whatever they asked for. "We'll buy our tomato and cabbage plants instead of growing them from the seed. They'll grow faster and do better."

"It won't take very long to plant such little packages of seed," John briskly declared. "I can plant mine in about ten minutes."

"Don't you ever believe it." His father laughed. "You can't plant them any old way, Johnny. The ground has to be prepared just so. Some kinds of seeds need to be planted deeper than others. It will take us the rest of the afternoon to plant your gardens. I shall not touch mine to-day."

John and Jimmy had long since decided what they were going to grow. John stuck to his preference for lettuce, radishes, corn, string-beans and cabbages. Jimmy was for corn, tomatoes, beets, cucumbers and onions. He also wanted pumpkins and watermelons. His father had no seed of either of these last but promised to buy some.

As both boys had chosen corn, Mr. Hopkins started the planting with that vegetable. He showed the willing young farmers how to dig the proper hole for the seed corn and how far apart to place the hills. After that John sowed his radish seed and Jimmy his onion and beet seeds, and so on, their father directing the work.

Junior's garden was still only a blank space with a good-sized hole at one side of it. When the digging began Junior deserted Doodle and came over to take a hand in things. He clamored to dig, too. To keep him out of mischief his father led him over to his own garden plot and gave him a hoe. He made the dirt fly with it for a few minutes then he grew tired of that method, sat down on the ground and scooped out the soft earth with his hands. By the time Netta came to carry him off for his nap, he was streaked with dirt from head to foot.

The next morning his father took him out and helped him plant his own little garden. He had corn and beans and radishes and beets. He declared that when his corn was ripe he would give it all to Doodle. That afternoon the boys and their father drove to a neighboring farm and bought cabbage and tomato plants. John

planted his cabbages and Jimmy his tomatoes as soon as they reached home. After they were in the ground and had been watered to revive them the boys were fascinated by the straight rows of little green plants.

“It seems fine to see something growing so quick when we only planted our gardens yesterday. A good hard rain will soon make the seeds come up.” John squinted up at the sky to see if there were any signs of a shower.

“Look, John!” Jimmy cried suddenly. His eyes were fixed on a boy who had just turned in at their gate. “That’s the boy we were talking to in the hardware store. That’s Dick. He’s coming to see us. Let’s go and meet him.”

Jimmy started rapidly in Dick’s direction. Dick grinned when he saw the boys approaching him, his deep dimples in strong evidence.

“Hello!” he greeted. “I thought I’d come and see you.” This time he was wearing a gray cap over his curls. He took it off and twirled it joyfully. He was evidently much pleased to see the Hopkins boys again.

“Hello. We’re glad you came,” was Jimmy’s hospitable return. “We’ve just finished planting our gardens.”

“ Our garden’s up and green. Pretty soon I’ll have to pull weeds.” Dick made a face by way of showing his distaste for this task. “ Say, I want you to come to our school next Friday with me. We’re going to have a good-bye party. Speak pieces and sing songs and all that out on the lawn. Then we have cake and ice-cream and lemonade and play games. Every year the school has it. I asked the teacher if I could bring you and she said, ‘ yes.’ It’s the last day of school, you know.”

“ Come on into the house and ask my mother.” Jimmy’s face had grown brighter and brighter as he listened to Dick. He thought Dick very nice to invite them and he was sure his mother would feel the same. If she did then she would let them have Dick for a friend. If his mother liked Dick, then his father would, too.

John was looking pleased, too. He was glad that it was to be a school party. He and Jimmy would surely be allowed to go to that.

Mrs. Hopkins sat in the living-room reading a magazine. She glanced up and smiled as the three boys came to a stop in front of her. Their eager faces showed they had something important to ask.

“Mother, this is Dick,” Jimmy said. “He wants us to go to a school party next Friday.”

“My name’s Richard Carter—my whole name,” Dick explained, his freckled face flushing with shyness. “My father keeps the hardware store.”

“So this is Richard. The boys were telling me about you. I am glad you came to see us.”

“I—yes’m. I’m glad I came, too. I’d like John and Jimmy to go to school with me next Friday.” Dick went on to tell Mrs. Hopkins about the party on the school lawn. John and Jimmy held their breath for fear the answer might be “no.”

“Yes, they may go. If you will come for them next Friday afternoon, Mr. Hopkins will take you all to school in the car.”

“Yes, ma’am. That’ll be fine.” Dick smiled broadly. He was so delighted he could hardly stand still. He wriggled about, crumpled his soft cap in one hand and said, “I guess I’d better go now. I’ll come on Friday at one o’clock. School begins at twenty minutes past one. It’s only a little way from here.”

“Can’t you stay and see our chickens and

everything?" John asked rather mournfully. He didn't want Dick to hurry away.

"Nope. It's most supper time. My mother lets me go where I like, but I have to be home for meals and never out after eight o'clock unless she knows where I am. If I don't do as I ought, then she makes me stay in for a week; after school and in the evenings."

Mrs. Hopkins smiled into Dick's merry blue eyes at this confession. He smiled back at her so honestly and squarely that she decided in favor of the freckle-faced boy even though he did go swimming in the lake.

After the three were outdoors again, John said abruptly, "My father won't let us go down to the lake without him. He's afraid something might happen to us, even if we didn't go in swimming."

"Then you'd better stay away from there," was Dick's quick advice. "My folks don't care if I go. If they said I couldn't, then I wouldn't."

Jimmy saved up this remark to tell at the dinner table that night. He was sure his mother liked Dick and he wanted his father to be of the same mind.

"He seems to be a manly, honest boy," she

said to her husband when Jimmy had finished telling what Dick had said about going swimming. "I told him the boys might go to school with him to the party next Friday. And you are to take them in your car."

"That settles it then. Dick is going to be a friend of the family," laughed Mr. Hopkins.

"And may we go to see him and have him here to play with us whenever we want to?" Jimmy asked eagerly.

"I guess so. Only don't get into mischief, the three of you."

"And when we name our house may we have a party and ask Dick to dinner? And may we have black chocolate cake and peach ice-cream?" both youngsters questioned at once.

"Ask your mother." Mr. Hopkins put his hands to his ears in dismay.

"Yes, to both questions. Remember to do your part and I will do the rest," Mrs. Hopkins significantly reminded.

"We'll have to be careful how we act till the two weeks are up," Jimmy said soberly to John that night after they had gone to bed. They were too full of excitement over the pleasures to come to be very sleepy. "It wouldn't be nice to

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invite Dick to a party and then do something so that we couldn't name the house. Because, *then*, we *couldn't* have a party. We'd have to tell him not to come."

CHAPTER X

A DISAGREEABLE BOY

PROMPTLY at one o'clock the following Friday Dick came for the boys, radiant-faced and dressed in his Sunday best. He wore a new brown suit, tan oxfords and stockings and a brown cap, set well over his curls. His blue eyes shone out from his freckled face like two stars and his lively skip up on the veranda showed just how joyous he was feeling.

"Hello, fellows," he greeted. John and Jimmy were hanging about the veranda rail waiting for him. "Did you think I wasn't coming?"

"We knew you'd come," Jimmy assured. "There's the car on the drive. Daddy just went back to the garage for a minute. He's waiting to take us. Here he comes now."

Mrs. Hopkins now came out on the veranda. "How do you do, Richard?" She gave Dick her hand. He beamed more broadly than ever. "It's so kind of you to give my boys this good

time. They have something to tell you which I hope will please you. Now hurry along, all three of you."

The boys scampered across the lawn to the car and the next moment were on the way to school. It took them not more than five minutes to reach the school building. That gave them plenty of time to go to Dick's room before school began. Dick's teacher shook hands with them and asked them about their school work.

"I think you will be in my room next year," she said. "Now you may sit on one of the front recitation benches. You may sit with John and James, Richard. When we march out to the school yard they may march behind you."

John and Jimmy would have liked to turn their heads for a good survey of the rows of children behind them, but they were too politely shy to do so.

"We will sing some of our songs until we receive the signal to pass out to the lawn," Miss Farlee, the teacher, said.

The children sang three songs, then a little girl in white suddenly opened the schoolroom door and called "Time" in a high, sweet voice. Next instant she was gone and Miss Farlee gave the

word "Rise," then, "First aisle forward and pass out into the corridor. Form in double line and wait for the signal."

The children had practiced this maneuver twice before so they did it very well. Jimmy and John found themselves marching down the corridor behind Dick and a tall, thin boy who shuffled his feet as he walked. From a room across the hall another double line had come. The two lines kept the width of the corridor apart but many of the children looked across and smiled or made merry little signs to one another.

The procession went down one long flight of stairs and then on down a broad, short flight, passed through a wide side corridor and stepped out onto the lawn. Dick's room and the one across the hall were the higher grades, so they were the last to come down-stairs. All the other children were on the lawn waiting for them. The pupils of each room stood formed in a square with a space of a few feet between each square.

They all stood very still, eyes on the vocal teacher who was to lead them in the opening song. It was "America," and it sounded very beautiful as sung by so many clear, strong voices. After "America" ten little girls in short, white, fluffy

skirts, with gold-colored sashes and gilt crowns on their heads gave a fairy dance on the green in a square reserved for the performers. A tall boy then sang a song. He sang so well he had to come back and sing again.

After that a primary teacher gave a recitation, eight boys sang in a double quartette and sixteen of the larger girls of the highest grade gave an Indian club drill. The principal of the school gave the children a short talk and then came the closing song, "Our Schooldays Now Are Over."

At one end of the lawn were two long tables. On one were three large punch-bowls of fruit lemonade with little glass cups around them. The other was decked with plate after plate of cakes. Behind this table was a row of ice-cream freezers. These tables were in charge of the mothers of some of the children. As soon as the closing song was over the teachers formed the pupils into long single lines to go for their treat. A certain number at a time went up to the tables until all had been served. The lemonade they might help themselves to. There were rustic benches set about under the trees. Some of the children sat down on them to enjoy their dainties. Others plumped down on the short green grass.

Dick took John and Jimmy to meet the crowd of boys he liked best to play with. There were half a dozen of them and they were very friendly to the two Js. A game of catch was soon started at one end of the lawn where no one would be likely to be hit by the ball. Jimmy's pitching won him the loud praise of the other boys. The youngsters began to plan for a real baseball team.

"See that fat boy over there; the one in the gray suit?" Charlie Newton pointed across the grass to where a large, red-faced boy stood, his hands in his pockets. "He says our fellows can't play ball. He's the captain of a team and they can't play for sour apples. He can't play ball himself. He's a big—a—a—big, stupid old goose. He lives in that white house on the street next to your street."

"Oh, yes. I saw him the other day. Their back lot is right next to ours. They have a wire fence all around their lot with jaggers on it," Jimmy nodded.

"Don't you ever go near him," warned Charlie. "He's a mean, rough boy. He does lots of real bad mischief and lays it to other boys."

Jimmy looked the fat boy over. He thought he had a disagreeable face. "He's older than we are, isn't he?"

"Not more'n a year. He's about thirteen, but he's only in Six B. He tries to go around with the high-school fellows but they won't look at him."

"I shan't go near him." Jimmy shut his lips firmly together. "I'll tell John to keep away from him, too." John was standing a little distance away talking to three or four boys. Jimmy decided to tell John on the way home. "What's his name?" he asked Charlie.

"Howard Myers. Just ask any of the kids how they like Howard Myers and listen to what they say," laughed Charlie.

"Come on, fellows!" called Nelson White. "It's almost four. We'll have time for just one more short game of catch before we're chased off the school lot." He grinned as he said this. "Let Hopkins pitch. He's a daisy pitcher."

Jimmy felt quite grown-up and elated to be called "Hopkins," and to have his pitching so highly praised.

The ball players were almost the last to leave the party. They played catch until one minute

after four. Jimmy and John left Dick at the school gates. They were in high spirits all the way home. They had so many pleasant things to talk about that Jimmy forgot to mention Howard Myers to John. When they reached the front gate they darted through it and raced each other to the house, laughing and shouting as they ran.

While they had been enjoying themselves at the school party and getting acquainted with their future schoolmates, Junior had not been idle. He had turned gardener on his own account and had brought about some amazing results.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT JUNIE DID

JUNIOR had awakened from his nap that afternoon with the fragrant, cheering odor of freshly-baked cookies in his small nose. It had taken him not more than two minutes to reach the kitchen where Netta was just putting the last of a batch of raisin cookies into the oven. On one end of the pastry table was a large colander heaped high with crisp raisin-filled cookies.

Junior had demanded four, got them, was told by his mother not to come back for any more. He had sauntered out of the kitchen, a cookie in each hand and two tucked into his blouse pocket. He had gone straight to the chicken park to treat Doodle, who was already beginning to understand that Junior never came to see him empty-handed.

When the last cooky crumb had vanished Junior had tried to coax Doodle to him as a matter of friendship, but the rooster merely strutted

back and forth at a safe distance from him. The little boy patiently tried to win Doodle over every time after he had fed his pet.

“You’re a naughty old Doodle,” he had finally said disgustedly and went off on a hunt for something else to do.

Junior had not been at all interested in the making of the gardens until he had watched John and Jimmy put their cabbage and tomato plants in the ground. The sturdy little plants had braced up wonderfully and were beginning to hold their green heads very straight. Junior had walked down the path the boys had marked out more than once to look at them. There was not a single green leaf in his garden. His father had told him to watch closely every day and he would soon see the little plants push up out of the earth.

He had wandered rather lonesomely from the chicken-yard to his garden plot. He missed John and Jimmy. This was the first afternoon they had been away since they had come to live in their new home. He had gone down on his hands and knees in the dirt, his eyes close to the ground, to see if he could find even the tip of a green plant. While he had been sitting in the dirt, staring down as hard as he could, he had

happened to think of something which pleased him. All of a sudden he had sprung up, clapped his hands gleefully and set off for the garage as fast as he could go.

The door of the garage was usually open by day so Junior had had no trouble in getting in. Standing in a corner of it were rakes, hoes, spades and other garden tools. Junior had unhesitatingly grabbed a hoe and started gardenward, dragging it over the lawn after him.

At the upper end of Jimmy's garden several ragweeds were already tall and flourishing. Junior looked them over and decided they would be pretty in his garden. He attacked one of them with a hoe but could not chop the roots out of the ground. Then he remembered seeing Jimmy pull one of these weeds up and he laid hold on the one he had been chopping. He pulled until his face grew scarlet. Suddenly the weed came up and he rolled backward in the dirt. He only chuckled at this mishap. Taking the ragweed and the hoe he went over to his own garden. He soon had the ragweed transplanted to the middle of his plot of ground. At last he had something growing in it.

He managed to haul up another good-sized

ragweed, but failed to budge a clump of pigweed he fancied. So he turned his attention to something easier to handle in the way of plants. He was just finishing a hard hour's work when he heard John and Jimmy come shouting up the walk and rushed to meet them.

"Look at Junie!" Jimmy pointed a playful finger at his little brother. "You've been rolling in the dirt. It's even in your hair."

"I are fixing my garden, Jimmy." Junior said "are" instead of "is" most of the time.

"Well, I are going to change my suit," mimicked Jimmy, "and come out and water mine."

"I don't know what there is to fix in your garden, Junie," John said. "You'd better not walk on it or go to digging in it or your seeds won't come up at all."

"I have lots of plants now," Junior declared with great satisfaction. "I have some like yours, Johnny. Come and see."

"You have!" exclaimed John, opening surprised eyes. "Who gave 'em to you?"

"I did," Junior replied indefinitely. "Come and see." He started toward his garden, beckoning his brothers on.

They went with him out of curiosity to see what he meant.

"Did Daddy give you any plants like mine this afternoon?" John asked. "Did he help you plant any?"

"I don't see Daddy for a long time. I found nice plants up there." Junior pointed toward the side of the square belonging to Jimmy and John.

"What!!!" John's voice rose to a yell of consternation. He darted forward, reached the garden path and ran along it to his plot. There he stopped and threw up his arms with another dismayed shout. Jimmy ran close behind him, anxious to see what had happened.

"Look!" screamed John. "Just *see* what that little monkey has gone and done." He pointed to where one of the two long rows of his cabbage plants had lately flourished. There was nothing left but a series of gaping holes. "*That's* where he got his plants like mine. H-m-m! I guess they *were* like mine."

John dashed over to Junior's garden, Jimmy at his heels. Junior had put John's cabbage plants in a kind of straggling circle around the ragweed centerpiece. They lopped disconso-

lately on the ground as though used up by such rough handling. At sight of them John's temper rose.

"You bad little rascal!" he cried and turned fiercely on Junior. "I'm going to make Father give you a *good spanking* for what you've done."

Jimmy stood looking at Junior's garden. He began to laugh and could not stop. He thought the ragweed in the middle was so funny. John saw that he was laughing and his rage gathered force.

"Yes, and *you* stand there and laugh," he sputtered wrathfully.

"I'm not laughing at *you*," Jimmy said hastily, trying to straighten his face. "I'm laughing because —— Oh, ha, ha, ha! That old ragweed is ——"

"Oh, ha, ha, ha!" jeered John, angrier than ever. "I'll give you something to laugh at." He swooped down upon Jimmy's tomato plants. He made a series of quick jerks along one row. "Now, how do you like it, Mr. Funnyface?" he flung at Jimmy.

Jimmy stopped laughing and stood very still. He did not care half so much about John's hav-

ing pulled up his plants. It was the spitefulness of the act that aroused his anger.

“ I s’pose you think you’ve done something.” He took a quick step toward John, eyes flashing, hands clenched. John squared off ready for battle.

Junior, the cause of the trouble, had set up a dismal “ boo-hoo.” He had begun to cry when John turned on him. When he saw his brothers getting ready to fight he wailed louder than ever.

“ You’d better cry after all the mischief *you’ve* done,” John told Junior angrily.

“ Humph! I wouldn’t fight with a baby,” Jimmy said with cold disdain. “ Junie didn’t mean any harm. He thought he was doing something great. Look at the way he came and told us. But you knew better than to do what you did. I’m never going to speak to you again if I can help it.” Jimmy walked away. Junior followed him. Jimmy was more pleasant company. He had had enough of John.

Jimmy went into the house and straight to his room. He smelled the spicy odor of the raisin cookies but did not want any. He was anxious to hurry into his gray knickers and a blouse and

put his abused tomato plants back where they belonged. John came sulkily in before he had finished changing his clothes. Jimmy paid no attention whatever to his brother. The instant he was redressed he left the room. Very soberly he went to the garage for the necessary garden tools. He was careful to leave those John used for him. He did not wish John to come near him or ask him for anything.

Suddenly Jimmy remembered something. His heart sank. He and John had done precisely what they were sure of not doing. They had quarreled; a "real bad mad," according to Jimmy's way of thinking. Now they could not name the house on the next Monday. They could not have a party. Dick would have to be told not to come for dinner. There would be no peach ice-cream and black chocolate cake. They could never name the house "Happy House," for Jimmy was sure that he would never speak to John again. Worst of all their father and mother would have to be told. Jimmy wondered as he picked up his cherished tomato plants and tucked them back, one by one, where they belonged, who would do the telling. If his mother had heard Junior crying, she might ask

what the matter was. If not, then either he or John would have to speak up.

John was also doing some thinking as he went over to Junior's domain and looked at his abused plants. When he saw how stringy and battered they were he grew angry again. There was no use in trying to take them back again. He would ask his father to get him some more and he would tell him what Junior had done. He hoped Junior *would* get a spanking. As for Jimmy! John swallowed a sudden lump in his throat. In his heart John adored Jimmy for his strength and manly ways.

In the garage Jimmy found Junior playing with Taffy. He had tied a little stick to a long string and was dragging it over the floor. He had hustled there out of John's angry way when Jimmy had gone to change his clothes.

"Are Favver goin' to spank me?" he asked mournfully of Jimmy. "I don't do nothing, Jimmy."

"Yes, you *did*," Jimmy replied with stress. "You pulled up John's plants and spoiled them. You let John's and my garden alone after this, Junie. You didn't mean to be mean, but you got into mischief—see? I guess Father won't spank

you, this time, but he might if you did it again."

"No more, never," promised Junior solemnly.

"It's time to go to the chickens, Jimmy."

"Yes, I know it is. Come along; we'll go and get their feed."

John had made no move toward feeding the chickens so Jimmy and Junior fed them. While they were in the chicken park Mr. Hopkins came home in the car. Generally John and Jimmy were on hand to greet him when he drove up and take the car into the garage. This time neither appeared.

"Where are the boys?" he inquired of Mrs. Hopkins as he came out on the veranda after having put the car away. "Not home from the school party yet?"

"Oh, yes. They came from the school at a little after four. They are out in the chicken-yard now." Mrs. Hopkins had not heard Junior cry and knew nothing of the trouble in the garden.

Presently John appeared around a corner of the house looking grave as a deacon. He sat down on the steps without saying a word. His father was reading aloud from the newspaper in

his hand to his mother. John began to plan what he should say to his father about Junior. While he was thinking hard, Junior and Jimmy came through the house and out onto the veranda. Jimmy climbed into the porch swing. Junior sidled up to his mother and leaned against her.

"Well, boys, did you have a good time at the school?" Mr. Hopkins finally laid down his paper and glanced from John to Jimmy.

"I had a fine time," Jimmy made quick reply. "I'm glad I went."

"I had a good time," John said rather stiffly.

"It was very thoughtful in your friend Dick to invite you. I suppose you invited him to the naming party. I'm sure you wouldn't forget. I told him you had something to tell him," Mrs. Hopkins said.

There was a long moment of silence then John slowly dragged out the words: "There—isn't—going—to—be—any—party." He glanced sulkily at Junior as he said it.

"What makes you say that, John?" Mrs. Hopkins studied John's flushed sulky face for an instant. Next she looked toward Jimmy whose features were stolidly set. She saw at once that the two boys were on the outs.

“ Oh, Jimmy and I have had a fuss, and it was all Junie’s fault,” John burst forth.

“ O-h-h!” Junior gave a funny little gasp and hid his face against his mother’s shoulder.

“ I don’t blame Junie for it,” Jimmy cut in in a scornful voice. “ I blame John. I’m never going to speak to him again.”

“ Hoity-toity!” Mr. Hopkins threw up his hands in pretended surprise. “ Never is a long time, Jimmy. Now what’s all this trouble about? John seems to be right about there not going to be any party. We certainly aren’t ready to take the name ‘ Happy House ’ yet.”

“ I don’t care, Father, Junie is to blame.” John proceeded to tell what Junior had done. He stopped when he came to the place where he had threatened Junior with a spanking.

“ So far Junior seems to be to blame,” Mr. Hopkins declared. “ Now what’s the rest of this tale of woe?” He eyed John shrewdly. “ You haven’t said a word yet about Jimmy. Where does he come into it?”

“ Well—well—I—was going to. Maybe Jimmy’d rather tell you. He doesn’t like me and thinks I’m to blame—and—all that.”

“I don’t want to say anything about it,” Jimmy said shortly.

“I’m not afraid to say what I did.” John tossed his head. He finished the tale of the garden squabble in a defiant voice. “It was all Junie’s fault,” he repeated.

“No, it was not Junior’s fault that you pulled up Jimmy’s plants in a fit of temper,” his father said decisively. “That was your own lack of ruling your spirit. I should say this was a three-part story of trouble. Junior is to blame for the first part, you for the second, and Jimmy for the third.”

“What’s the third part? You mean because I laughed?” Jimmy looked faintly perplexed. “I only laughed at the way Junie had stuck weeds in the middle of his garden. I was sorry for John, but he ——”

“The third part is your saying you are never going to speak to John again. You think you mean that, but you don’t.”

“Yes, I do,” Jimmy insisted. “I don’t want to speak to him at all.”

“Very well. I’m going to forbid you to speak to John or John to speak to you for one week. We’ll see how you feel at the end of that time.

I shan't punish you, John, for pulling up Jimmy's plants except to say that I could never trust a spiteful boy. You are not to threaten Junior with a spanking at any time. Leave discipline to your mother and me."

"Well, Junie had *no business* to spoil my cabbage plants," John cried out resentfully. "He *ought* to be spanked for doing such a trick."

"He didn't do it for spite as you did when you pulled up Jimmy's plants," interposed Mrs. Hopkins. "Junie has a good many things to learn yet that you and Jimmy know."

"You may have other plants to replace those Junie spoiled," promised his father. "One thing Junie must learn at once is to keep out of the other fellow's garden. Come here, Junior." He beckoned to the little boy who was screening himself behind his mother.

Junior obeyed with slow steps. His father reached forward and placed a firm hand on each small shoulder. He looked squarely into Junior's rosy face and began to lay down the law to him in short, effective sentences. At the end of the emphatic lecture Junior was promised the dreaded spanking if he again meddled with anyone's garden but his own.

“When can we name the house?” Jimmy questioned gloomily as his father folded his paper and rose to go into the house.

“I don’t know.” Mr. Hopkins purposely shrugged his shoulders to emphasize his indifference.

“We were good almost two weeks.”

“Almost, but not quite. Suppose I were to give you another two weeks’ trial, beginning Monday when your first two weeks were up, what good would it do when you and John aren’t on speaking terms? You can’t have a happy house when two members of the household won’t speak to each other. It looks to me as though it might be quite a while before we can name our home ‘Happy House.’”

CHAPTER XII

ANOTHER KIND OF BOY

THE next day was Saturday. John's and Jimmy's first thoughts that morning were of Dick and how they were going to tell him of the dismal change in their plans. Certainly they could not go together to the hardware store to tell him, and how could the one know whether the other intended to go?

"Mother," John caught at his mother's sleeve as she passed him in the living-room, "will you please say something to Jimmy that I can't say?"

"No, sir," was the prompt refusal. "You and Jimmy raised the wall between you. You'll have to leave it up now for at least a week."

"But, Mother, I don't know whether Jimmy's going to tell Dick. One of us has to. If we don't he'll come to see us Monday, and we don't speak to each other, and it will be *awful*."

"I think you had best go and see Dick and tell him," his mother said in a grave tone. John

knew it meant that she considered him the most to blame.

“All right, I will. May I go this morning?” John asked meek permission.

“Yes. Go now, if you like.”

John’s clouded face lightened a little as he took his cap from the hall rack and hurried out of the house. It was not long afterward until Jimmy came to her with the same problem.

“John has gone to Dick’s, Jimmy.” Mrs. Hopkins was secretly much amused.

“Well,” Jimmy sighed, “I’m glad Dick’s going to know, anyhow.”

John had not gone far along the street into which he turned from their own street when he heard a hail of, “Hello, Hopkins.” He stopped short in surprise. A gray roadster had just passed. Now it was slowing down to a stop. A stout, red-faced boy in a gray suit was leaning out of the driver’s seat.

“Hello,” John returned. He had seen the boy in gray on the school lawn at the party. He thought him the same boy who lived in the white house on the next street to their own.

“You don’t know me, but I know you. I see you every day from our lot,” the fat boy said

affably. "I see you and your brother playing with the little kid. I was going to talk to you over at school yesterday but I don't like that bunch of fellows you were playing ball with. *They* don't know how to play ball. Your brother is some pitcher, though."

John brightened at this praise of Jimmy. Now that he and Jimmy were on the outs he had begun to value his brother. "My brother Jimmy was the best pitcher in our school," he said with pride.

"Is that so? Come on and take a ride with me. I'm not going far. Can you run a car?" Howard Myers motioned John toward the automobile.

"A little bit. Father won't let us drive without him." John skipped into the car. He thought it would be fun to take just a little ride with this new boy before going to see Dick.

"My father's going to give me this car," declared Howard grandly. "I've been teasing him for it, but he says I'm too young to own one yet. I'll make him come across with it, soon. Want to see me speed her up a little?"

Without waiting for a reply Howard increased the speed of the machine until they were going

altogether too fast for the street they were in. Before John knew it they had turned into Lakeview Pike. Suddenly, and much nearer than the day on which he had first seen it, they came upon Rainbow Lake. John gasped as Howard shot the car down a short side branching of the pike that brought them within a few yards of the rippling blue water. The short side branch ended at a little yellow shack where gasoline and automobile accessories were sold. In front of the shack stood a large black car. Howard parked the roadster directly behind it.

"Come along." He nodded toward the lake. "Let's go down and throw stones into the water. I'll bet I can skip a stone more times than you can."

"I—I can't." John drew back. "I—you see, I promised my father I wouldn't come down here. I didn't know you were going to drive to the lake."

"Oh, shucks. Don't be a baby. I hope you're not a silly little mamma's boy. It won't kill you just to walk along the lake shore. You're down here now. You don't have to tell him about it, do you?"

"Yes, I do," John said firmly. "If I don't

get out of the car he won't care because I didn't know I was coming here. If I do, that's different."

"Oh, all right. You stay there if you want to. Now watch me swing a few rocks over the pond." Howard lumbered ungracefully down to the lake's edge and began to pick up stones. He collected a little pile, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, swung his body half-way around and zipped a large flat stone into the water. "That's the way I do it!" he called boastfully to John.

While he was whizzing stones into the lake and shouting back to John, three barefooted boys suddenly appeared from behind Howard's roadster. They had heard Howard's loud tones and come from the pike to see what was going on. They paused beside the gray roadster and began to look it over. They were bright-faced, clean-looking boys and they gazed rather shyly at John. One of them said, "Hello," and another reached out and rubbed his hand curiously along one of the back tires of the car.

He had hardly touched it when Howard called at top voice: "Hey, there, you fresh kids, get out! Keep away from that machine."

“Aw, who you calling fresh kids?” the boy who had touched the car yelled back at Howard. “We can stay here if we want to.”

“Oh, you *can*? Well, I guess you can’t. Beat it before I chase you away.” Howard moved threateningly forward.

“Who’s afraid? Not us.” The three stood their ground. “We’ll go when we get good and ready.”

“You’ll go before that,” Howard bullied. Without waiting to say more he picked up a medium-sized stone and threw it at the boys. He had not stopped to consider John in the car. Thus challenged the three boys picked up stones in a flash and returned the fire. The stones they hastily gathered up were mere pebbles beside the ones Howard was throwing.

“Come on, kids. He’s throwin’ *rocks*. I don’t want to get hit by one. Who wants to look at his old machine anyway?” One of the trio headed for the pike. The others followed him. Howard exerted all his strength to send a good-sized stone after them. He aimed wildly. There was a crash, a sound of splintering glass — The stone had gone straight through the windshield of the black car.

“Good-night! We’ve got to get out of here.” Howard rushed to the car and clambered into the driver’s seat. He was just backing the car for a turn when two men came hurrying out of the yellow shack.

One of them was small and dark: the owner of the shop. The other was tall and stout: the owner of the car. They both shouted after Howard but he kept on going.

“That’s Mr. Burton’s car,” he said, half laughing. “I hope he doesn’t know *this* car when he sees it. He’s an awful old crank.”

“But—but—you smashed his windshield.” John looked scared. “You’ll have to tell him and pay for it.”

“Ho, ho, ho!” Howard threw back his head and laughed. “Think I want to go broke the rest of the summer? It would take a lot of my pocket money to buy a new windshield. Let him buy it. He’s rich. Besides my father’d know it then, and there *would* be a fuss. Don’t you dare tell anybody I broke it.” He gave John an unpleasant look. “If you ever say a word, I’ll fight you.”

John was silent. He wished he had not taken a ride with Howard. “I guess you’d better let

me out in front of the hardware store," he said. "I have to go there." Howard already had the car well into Lakeview.

"See here, that don't go. You've got to promise you won't tell anybody what I did. If you do, I'll say it was you and not me that broke it."

"Why, I didn't even have a stone in my hand!" John exclaimed indignantly. "You nearly hit *me* with the stones you threw. I won't promise anything. If I was asked who did it I wouldn't say your name. If I was asked *if* you did it I'd try not to answer. I'm not a telltale."

"You'd better not tell tales about me." Howard was now as hateful as he had been pleasant. "If you do ——"

"Here, you young rascal, what do you mean by driving off in my roadster?" A very tall man with iron-gray side whiskers and a roaring voice was hurrying angrily along the walk toward the car. "How many times have you been told not to dare touch my roadster? You thought I would be away all day and you'd enjoy yourself. You won't feel so happy after I am through with you, young man."

"Oh, see here, Pa, you know ——" Howard began in a whining tone.

John waited to hear no more. He slipped past Howard and out of the roadster without a word. Howard was too busy trying to stave off his father's anger to notice John.

"Ah-h-h-h!" John drew a long breath, then darted toward the high steps of the hardware store. He looked back once and saw the roadster still standing there. Several people stood listening and laughing as the scolding Mr. Myers was still roaring at Howard. The fat boy had climbed into the back seat and his father was preparing to take the wheel.

He went into the store and found Dick busily straightening the piles of agate, tin and granite-ware on the floor.

"Why, hello!" Dick's face instantly lighted up. "I didn't think I'd see you to-day. This is an awful job I have to do, but my father said I couldn't go to the movies to-night unless I straightened up this stuff."

John sat down on an overturned galvanized wash-tub and began to tell Dick about why there was to be no party. Dick left off piling up stew pans and seated himself cross-legged on the floor, his freckled face alive with sympathy.

"That's too bad," he said several times while

John was telling his story. "Isn't Jimmy *ever* going to speak to you again?"

"Don't know," John answered gloomily. "I'm not the least teeny bit mad at him. He's mad at me. Maybe he won't speak to me after the week's up. You can come to see us any day, you know, but you'll have to play with me a while and then with Jimmy. We can't have much fun that way. I'm sorry about the party."

"You might have one some other time," Dick comforted.

"I don't know when," John spoke doubtfully. "Father said it might be a long while before we could name the house. What time is it, Dick?"

Dick glanced importantly at a silver wrist-watch he wore on a brown leather strap and said: "Ten minutes to twelve."

"Gracious!" John hastily rose from the tub. "I'll have to go. I thought it was about eleven o'clock. We have our lunch at half-past twelve." He wanted very much to tell Dick about his ride with Howard Myers, but he had said to Howard that he was not a telltale. Now he must live up to his own words. He couldn't resist asking a question, however. "Do you know a boy named

Howard Myers?" he said, as Dick walked beside him to the door.

"Uh-h-h-h!" Dick pretended to collapse. "Do I? I wish I didn't. Why, you saw him the other day at the school party! That old fatty in the gray suit. The fellows were talking about him to you."

"Not to me." John shook his head. "I—I didn't know anything about who he was until this morning."

"I guess it was Jimmy the boys told about Howard, then. Was he over to your house? He lives near you, you know. He might try to be chummy with you and Jimmy because you're new here and don't know what a meany he is. None of us fellows have any use for him."

"I—he was driving his father's car this morning and he met his father walking along past the post-office. His father was mad because he had the car. He scolded him right in the street before everybody." John felt free to say this much.

Dick giggled enjoyment of Howard's downfall. "Serves him right. His mother can't make him mind. Takes his father to get after him."

John said good-bye to Dick and started for

home feeling more down-hearted than ever. If he had not lost his temper and jerked up Jimmy's tomato plants he would not have had to go to see Dick about the party. Then he would not have met Howard Myers. If he had not quarreled with Jimmy he would have been told by Jimmy what the boys had said of Howard. Worst of all, he had disobeyed his father without meaning to do so. He had been down to the lake.

CHAPTER XIII

LOST—ONE GOOD OPINION

JOHN thought he would tell his father the first thing about having gone riding with Howard and the smashing of the windshield. His courage failed him, however, and he said nothing about it until the following afternoon. His father was out in front of the garage putting a new tire on the automobile. John hung about and watched him for a little without saying a word. His father noticed the silence, for John usually had more to say than Jimmy. He thought John was lost without Jimmy and was tempted to take away the penalty he had placed upon them. He did not yield to his own kindly impulse, for both boys needed the lesson. John too frequently lost his temper and Jimmy was inclined to turn very hard-hearted when aroused to anger.

“I have to tell you something,” John began suddenly. “You’ll think maybe I meant to do it, but I didn’t. It’s about a boy named Howard Myers and—and—me. He lives in that white

house.” John pointed toward the Myers’ residence. He continued jerkily with the story of his unlucky morning ride with Howard.

Mr. Hopkins said not a word until John had finished. “Well, John,” he stood up from his work and looked down at his crestfallen son, “who is going to pay for that broken windshield?”

“The man—that Mr. Burton, I s’pose, who owns the car. He’ll have to, for he doesn’t know Howard smashed it. I feel as if *I* ought to help pay for it. I was with Howard. I’ve some money in my bank; pretty near fifteen dollars.” John had been saving this money to buy a large toy aeroplane that could sail quite high and would cost fifty dollars.

“Go and get it,” his father briskly ordered.

John turned and went sadly to the house for his toy bank. He soon returned with it and held it out to his father.

“Count the money,” his father said briefly.

“Fourteen dollars and eighty-five cents,” John presently announced.

“All right. Put it back in your bank and get into the car. The tire is on, and you and I are going to take a ride to see Mr. Burton.”

“Do you know where he lives?” John asked curiously.

“No, but I can soon find out. We’ll take the bank with us. I wish Mr. Burton to understand that you are doing right at a sacrifice. I needn’t warn you not to play with this Myers boy. You shouldn’t have set foot in his car. A boy of his age isn’t a fit driver for a high-powered car. When you saw you were at the lake you should have got out of the car at once and gone on about your business. You didn’t, and so you met trouble. There’s no use in my punishing you for having acted foolishly. It will come hard on you to have to pay up. But it’s the manly way, Johnny—the only way.”

“I know it.” John was very near to crying. His lip quivered a tiny bit as he got into the car. “Father, I don’t want to tell Mr. Burton Howard Myers’ name. Do I have to?”

“Leave that to me. It was your business to tell me his name and you did. That lets you out, Son.”

John said hardly a word during the drive. He wondered what Jimmy would say if he knew where they were going. His father stopped at the drug-store and inquired where Mr. Burton

lived. He lived on Sycamore Avenue in a very large showy white stone house with pale yellow trimmings.

They parked the car before the iron-fenced lawn and went up a white stone walk to the many-columned veranda. John squared his shoulders as he marched bravely along beside his father, his cherished bank under his left arm. He was going to act like a man, he told himself. His father rang the bell and a maid answered the door and ushered them into a high-ceilinged reception-hall set with expensive furniture. After a few minutes Mr. Burton entered the hall from a side room.

“Good-afternoon,” he greeted in a booming voice. “What can I do for you?”

John thought he had never before seen such a large man outside of a circus. He was not only stout, but very tall.

It did not take Mr. Hopkins long to explain the nature of his call.

“So this is the young rascal who was with Myers, is it?” He gave Mr. Hopkins a meaning glance over John’s head. He drew his heavy brows together and glared severely at John.

John didn't mind the glaring. He supposed he deserved it. He nearly jumped with surprise when he heard Mr. Burton mention Howard's name.

"Yes, sir. I was with him, but I didn't know who he was." John went on to explain as best he could. His father sat silent and let him do the talking. When he offered Mr. Burton the money from his bank the big man waved him aside.

"Keep it; keep it. It's young Myers who ought to be made to pay up. I shall tell his father, though I won't accept any money for the windshield from him, either. I want to see the Myers boy get a good whaling. That's what all these boys need." He frowned at John again. "He'll try to squirm out of it, I expect, but Jenks, who owns the shop down at the lake, saw him fire the stone. I've got him good and tight. Well, boys of to-day aren't much good. I don't take much stock in them."

Mr. Hopkins and John made their call short. Mr. Burton was not particularly cordial. It was plain to see that he did not believe John had spoken the truth. He suspected John had been throwing stones, too.

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“Why, he didn’t believe me!” John cried when they were in the car again. “He thinks I’m just the same as Howard Myers!”

“I’m afraid he does,” Mr. Hopkins agreed soberly.

“What shall I do with my bank money now; give it to you?”

“No; you may keep the money. You’ve lost something more valuable. You’ve lost someone’s good opinion.”

John twisted uneasily in the seat. “I know it,” he admitted. He peered anxiously out of the car as it rolled up the drive. He was looking for Jimmy. He wondered if Jimmy would wonder where he and his father had been.

Jimmy was at that moment at the very back of the Hopkins’ lot trying to coax Sunshine off the Myers’ property. The Myers’ chicken-yard was located on the land which adjoined that of Mr. Hopkins. Jimmy had been taking a lonely walk along the back of the lot, when, glancing into the chicken-yard, he had caught a glimpse of something bright orange. A second look and he had recognized Sunshine. The big yellow puss was sitting very still at one side of the wired-in park intently watching something. He was paying no

attention to the chickens. They, in turn, were neither interested nor afraid of him.

How Sunshine had managed to get into the Myers' chicken park was a mystery to Jimmy. The wire inclosing it was at least ten feet high and securely fastened at the bottom.

"He's watching for a rat, maybe," Jimmy said aloud. "He oughtn't to be there, though. If someone came out to the park and saw him it would look as if he was after the chickens. Sunny, you come right straight home. Do you hear me?" Jimmy tried to make his voice very stern. Sunshine appeared to have become deaf. Jimmy raised his voice and called again.

This time someone besides Sunshine heard him. Howard Myers was walking about the back yard in solitary grandeur. He was finding life hard. He had not only received the thrashing promised by his father; he had also been forbidden to go off the Myers' premises for three days. He had just come out of the house with almost a quarter of a chocolate layer cake in one hand, to which he had helped himself from the pantry. He was hungrily gobbling it when he heard Jimmy's voice. Peering in the direction of the sound he made out a boyish figure skirting the

back stretch of chicken wire. Howard hustled toward the chicken park to see what was going on.

The instant he saw Sunshine he dashed through the wire gate and into the park after him, waving his arms and shouting, "Scat, you cat, you! Get out!" He picked up a stone and threw it at the startled Angora. Sunshine made a frightened leap and dodged it. Like a flash he darted to one of the stout stakes which supported the wire fence and climbed it. He ran like a hunted rabbit across the Hopkins' lot and was soon lost to sight among the berry bushes.

"Hey, there, you Hopkins kid," Howard yelled insolently at Jimmy who was just turning away from the wire. "If you don't keep your old yellow cat at home our hired man's going to shoot it. He kills our chickens. We've found three dead in the park just lately. That goes!"

Jimmy had intended to hurry away after Sunshine. He had flushed angrily when Howard threw the stone but he knew Sunshine had no business in the Myers' chicken-yard. At the threat that Sunshine would be shot he changed his mind and sent back the defiant return, "I

don't believe he ever *touched* one of your chickens. He was after a rat in your park. I was watching him, and I know. It's probably rats that are killing your chickens. If your hired man ever touches my cat I'll—I'll—he'll be sorry. That's all."

Jimmy walked away. Howard screamed after him, "Is that so?" in a mocking tone, and, "Oh, don't you think you're smart?"

"He's a mean boy, sure as can be," Jimmy was thinking as he walked toward the house. "I forgot to tell John about him. I'll tell him as soon as I can." Jimmy sighed and buried his hands deep in his pockets. He wished the hard week was over.

Meanwhile fresh trouble was on its way to Howard. Directly after Mr. Hopkins' and John's call on him Mr. Burton had decided to report Howard's misdeed to his father and have it off his mind. He had called Mr. Myers on the telephone at the Lakeview Bank. Mr. Myers was the president of the bank and one of Lakeview's leading citizens. He was still angry with Howard for taking his roadster so he was even less pleased to hear of other mischief his son had done.

When he reached home he hunted at once for Howard and gave him a second whipping. In vain Howard tried to make him believe that it was John who had done the mischief and then laid it to him in order to clear himself.

"No, young man. You can't fool me. Burton said you did it and he knows," was his father's grim remark. "I'm going to take away your pocket money for a month for this performance."

Howard was sure that no one but John had known who threw the stone. Of course it was John who had gone and told Mr. Burton. He made up his mind that he would be even with John for "tattling."

At breakfast the next morning John stared in blank surprise at an envelope beside his plate addressed to "Tattle-tale John Hopkins."

"Why—why—where did I get this from?" he asked his mother.

"Netta found it under the milk bottles outside the front door this morning," was the reply. "Someone doesn't seem to like you very well, John."

"Huh, I guess not." John already had the letter out of the envelope. Jimmy was pretending to be busy with his breakfast, but he could

not help looking from under his eyelashes at John and his letter.

John was reading to himself and frowning as he read:

“SMARTY TATTLE-TALE:

“You went and told old grouch Burton about the you know what happened at the lake yesterday. He had to go and tell my father. I have been abused. The next time I see you I will give you a good licking. I will lick your brother, too, and our hired man will shoot your cat that kills our chickens. You’ll be sorry you didn’t keep still about the lake.

“Yours, very mad at you,
“HOWARD MYERS.”

John was so amazed and upset at this war-like message he forgot that his mother and Jimmy might not understand the letter. He read it aloud to his father who only laughed and said that it had certainly been written by a cowardly boy. Mr. Hopkins had told Mrs. Hopkins about the windshield but it was a complete surprise to Jimmy.

“I don’t know what he means about our cat,” John said, wrinkling his forehead. “Taffy and Sunny don’t kill chickens.”

“ Oh, Sunshine ——” Jimmy began excitedly. He stopped and looked appealingly at his mother.

She smilingly shook her head. She would not let him tell her what he wanted to say for John’s benefit. On the other hand Jimmy was wild to know where John had met Howard Myers and what had happened at the lake. But the wall was still up and must stay up until the end of that long, long week.

CHAPTER XIV.

FUN AT THE FIRE HOUSE

ON Friday evening, one week after the quarrel in the garden Mr. Hopkins called John and Jimmy into the library and there the two relieved little brothers made peace. They shook hands half a dozen times and finally grabbed each other in a genuine bear hug which they tried to pretend was a friendly scuffle. They sat up in bed for almost an hour that night talking. Before they finally went to sleep John knew all about Sunshine's mishap and Jimmy knew the disastrous adventure of the lake.

"You'll have to help me watch Sunny and Taffy, too," Jimmy told John. "Taffy's never been over in that old chicken park yet, but he might go. I wish Sunny wouldn't. I asked Daddy if that hired man would dare shoot Sunshine. He said, 'Yes,' he would do it whether he had a right to or not. Father said if Sunny

got hurt or killed he would make a big fuss about it for he knows Sunny never catches chickens. But I don't want him to get hurt," Jimmy ended in a worried tone.

During the next few days, however, Sunshine stayed strictly on the Hopkins' lot to the satisfaction of the boys who soon formed the habit of hunting for Sunny every two or three hours. They would make the round of the garage, chicken-yard and beyond the berry bushes calling, "Here, Sunny, Sunny Sunshine!" Sometimes Sunshine would come yawning around a corner all of a sudden as though he would say, "Now why did you wake me up when I was having such a glorious sleep?"

As the first lovely days of summer slipped by John and Jimmy wondered if their father were ever going to let them name the house. Several times they had asked him about it and each time he had returned briefly, "Not yet."

Dick had gone to the seashore to spend a week at his aunt's cottage. He had promised the two Js he would be back before the Fourth of July. If only their father would let them name the house on the Fourth they could have a splendid party with fireworks in the evening. Jimmy had

five dollars he had purposely saved for fireworks and John had agreed to spend some of the money in his bank to help buy them. They decided to say not a word to their father until three days before the Fourth then coax him as hard as they dared.

The week before the Fourth of July, however, a young man came to the house and invited Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins to bring their children and come to a Fourth of July picnic at the Lakeview Hose House. Each year, the young man said, the firemen gave this picnic especially for the children of Lakeview so that they might have plenty of fireworks without any one of them getting hurt. Each family was asked to give a dollar, or more if they wished, and the money was used for fireworks and ice-cream. There were to be races, games and contests for the boys and girls and dancing for the grown folks. Some of the women of Lakeview would serve a dinner on the lawn.

The boys were so delighted with the idea of the Fire House picnic they forgot about their own party. They planned to spend some of their money on the picnic grounds if there should be any candy or popcorn stands. Dick came home

two days before the Fourth. He came to see his new chums about half an hour after he got home.

“We have a great old time at the Fire House on the Fourth,” Dick told them. “’Bout all the people in Lakeview are there. All the men like Mr. Burton, and those that have lots of money go to the picnic. You see they lived in this town when they weren’t any older than we are. Every year they went to the Fire House picnic. Mr. Burton was an awful poor boy then. He told my father that was the only good time he had, just once a year.”

John thought to himself that being so poor when he was a boy and never having had any good times was probably what had made Mr. Burton act so cranky when he and his father went to the rich man’s house. He felt quite sorry for the big cross man with the angry voice.

“Is that Howard Myers going to be there?” Jimmy asked a trifle scornfully.

“Oh, sure. His father used to belong to the fire company. He gives money to the Fire House every year. Howard always thinks he’s awful smart at the picnic.”

“Do the firemen live in this hose house?” John

questioned. "They do in the city and get money for it and their uniforms and everything."

"Nope; they don't do that way here. All the firemen live at home and run to the Fire House when the fire bell rings. My father belongs, but nobody pays him any money for going to the fires. He just goes because he says it's his duty. This is only a little fire company, you know. It hasn't any big truck with long ladders. It has only an engine with the hose and water buckets and little ladders all hung on the sides of the engine. Some of the firemen ride on it, too, to the fires. They wear green caps with a blue band around 'em. On the band it says 'Volunteer.' I'll show you the engine the day of the picnic," Dick eagerly promised.

Fourth of July morning dawned clear and hot, but not too hot. It was a day of solid blue skies and a few white clouds with the sun shining just warm enough to make it pleasant for everyone. The three Js could see the Fire House from where they lived. It was a faded brown building with a tall bell-cupola. It was decorated with a large flag which fluttered lazily in the morning breeze.

The picnic was to begin at one o'clock, but

nearly everyone was on the grounds surrounding the Fire House before then. This celebration was especially for the children so the people of Lakeview had tried to give them plenty of fun to amuse them. Several persons had loaned gayly-painted lawn swings and these had been set at different places on the grounds. Some of the Lakeview young men had rigged up a Punch and Judy show and a shooting gallery. There was a peanut man and a popcorn stand and two candy booths besides a free lemonade and orangeade stand. A balloon man strolled about with pink, red, purple and blue sausage balloons. There were to be no long speeches or singing. Everyone was simply to start in and have a merry time.

John saw the balloons and bought Junior a green one. He ran to Junie with it and bumped smartly into Jimmy who was coming along with a pink one in his hand. So Junior had two balloons and marched about with his father and mother, a balloon sailing from each hand.

The races and contests began at two o'clock. There were egg and spoon and potato races and a hop, skip and a jump race, besides a hundred-yard dash for both boys and girls. There were

jumping and throwing and balancing contests, too. These were mostly for the older boys and men.

Nelson White, one of the boys John and Jimmy had met at school, won the hundred-yard dash for boys. Dick's particular chums were all at the picnic and it was not long until the whole crowd of youngsters, including John and Jimmy, were wandering around the lot together having the best kind of time. Howard Myers was parading the grounds with two boys a little older than himself. Dick told Jimmy they were high-school freshies and not very well liked. The three seemed to be enjoying themselves. They talked and laughed very loudly and called out jeering remarks at the men who sold popcorn and peanuts. Howard was wearing a white flannel suit and appeared fatter than ever.

Long before the races and contests were over the wives and daughters of the firemen and some of their friends had begun to set several very long tables on the lawn. Little by little the tables began to be covered with a great variety of things to eat. There were different kinds of sandwiches, high plates of brown bread, baked beans, olives, pickles and jellies, salads and many kinds of

cake. The fragrant scent of coffee filled the air and it made one feel hungry just to glance at the loaded tables.

At one side of the Fire House was a high stack of folding chairs. The men and boys brought them over and set them in rows along the tables. By the time the last prize had been awarded in the races and contests the feast was ready. The ice-cream was to be kept until later and served with cake during the evening.

About six o'clock Mr. Burton came to the Fire House in an automobile. With him were three men of nearly his own age. The firemen seemed glad to see him and his friends. They set a special table for them to eat at. Afterward they placed a row of chairs from inside the house along the back wall of the building where these welcome visitors could best see the fireworks. As soon as it was dark enough the display would begin.

John felt a little ashamed when he saw Mr. Burton. There was the man whose good opinion he had lost. Once in running with his crowd of boys he passed right by the big man. Mr. Burton was tilting back in a wide chair with broad arms and a low back.

“Look a little out there, you boys!” he cried severely, as the youngsters swept past him. “Don’t care who you crash into, do you?”

John was not the only boy on the lot who was thinking of Mr. Burton. Howard Myers was trying to think of some way to pay the “grouch” back for reporting him to his father. He confided to his two companions that he knew a man he’d like to play a joke on, but he couldn’t think what to do to give him a good scare.

“Easiest thing there is,” one of the two told him. “I’ll show you something.” He put his hand inside his coat and drew out three cannon firecrackers.

“Oh, give me ’em!” Howard snatched at the giant crackers.

“Go easy. You may have just one. I need the others. I’ve friends of my own I want to surprise.”

Howard teased for “Only one more,” but did not get it. At first he thought he would tell his pals whom he wanted to scare. He did not. He was afraid they might tell tales. He fully intended to throw the big firecracker somewhere very close to Mr. Burton so it would go off almost in the “grouch’s” ears. He planned to get

behind the big man and throw the noisy cracker just as the fireworks were beginning. It would then be too dark to see who had thrown it. He hoped Mr. Burton would sit still just where he was. It would be fine to land the firecracker directly under his chair. He would probably tip over. Howard giggled as he thought of how funny that would be. He was a thoroughly unkind boy who had no mercy in his heart for anyone.

As it began to grow dark he made an excuse to leave his two companions. They had become tired of him and were not sorry to lose his company. Mr. Burton's chair was the last one on the end nearest a corner of the Fire House. Howard made a wide circle around it, then began to draw a little nearer. He was watching for a good opportunity to light the cracker and give it a quick fling before anyone saw him. People were passing back and forth and around him and he knew he would have to be quick as a flash, and sly.

He was getting ready to light the firecracker when Mr. Burton suddenly rose from his chair and strolled toward the front of the Fire House. Howard gave a disappointed "Oof!" and started

after the big man. Mr. Burton was just entering the hose house as Howard came round the corner. The large double doors had been thrown wide open and a broad space left clear for the picnickers who would later go up-stairs to the hall to dance.

Half-way back on the cleared space Mr. Burton met a fireman and stopped to speak to him. Howard gave a hasty glance about him. No one appeared to be noticing him. He took a box of safety matches from a coat pocket and softly lighted one. This was too good a chance to lose. He would not wait until the fireworks began. He would throw the cracker and dash around the corner in half a second.

Holding it as close to him as he dared he lit the fuse and hung on to the cracker until he was sure the fuse would not die out. Then he flung it straight toward Mr. Burton's large white buckskin ties as he stood with his feet rather wide apart talking loudly to the fireman. Howard had gone only a step or two when he bumped into half a dozen boys headed by Dick and John. They darted past him and ran into the Fire House all talking at once. And at that moment the firecracker exploded with a terrific bang.

Mr. Burton gave a startled shout of, "Wha-a-a-a!" and made a long sideways leap that looked as though he was about to start to fly. The fireman jumped, too, then he called out angrily, "I'll tend to you boys for that trick! I'll tell your fathers on you. I know most of you."

"We didn't throw that cracker!" Nelson White exclaimed indignantly. "What do you take us for? We wouldn't do such a thing!"

"I know who threw it!" Dick cried excitedly. "You know the fellow we met just as we were coming in here."

"Aw, we came to look at the fire engine!" declared Ned Blake. "We wanted to show it to two boys who never saw it before."

"You keep out of here," warned the fireman. "I wouldn't trust you near the engine. I know you kids. You threw that cracker, all right enough. How about it, Mr. Burton?"

"I guess, yes," nodded the big man very disagreeably. His eyes came to rest on John. He stared frowningly at John and said, "So you're mixed up in this, too. You're the boy who was with young Myers when he broke my windshield."

Your father'd better take you in hand. You need correction."

Before John could think of a word to say in his own defense the fireman shooed them all out of the hose house and told them not to come in again without their parents. They went feeling boyishly grieved at the injustice done them. John felt the most hurt of all. Now Mr. Burton would have a worse opinion of him than before and he hadn't done anything to merit it.

"I'll get after that Howard Myers and make him own up to throwing that cracker. I'll fight him if I have to. I'll make him write it down on a paper and then I'll show the paper to Mr. Burton and that fireman." All this Nelson White vengefully promised to do.

"You could lick him, Nelson," Dick declared. "You're stronger than he is. It's a wonder I didn't get blamed. I always have to stand for the mischief the other kids do."

The first Roman candle suddenly began to throw off lovely, colored stars and a skyrocket trailed fire across the night sky with a long hiss. The boys' indignation meeting broke up. With one accord they started for a spot they had earlier chosen as the best place to watch the fireworks.

They were so absorbed and delighted by the many forms of brilliantly-colored fire that filled the sky and the wonderful set pieces they forgot Mr. Burton.

John and Jimmy remembered him again when they were walking home from the Fire House ahead of their father and mother. It was after ten and they were both ready to turn in. Junior was so sleepy his father had to carry him.

"I wish that old Howard Myers would go and live at the North Pole," John said crossly. "We'll never have much fun while he's around here."

"Maybe he wouldn't be so fat if he did," Jimmy chuckled faintly. "He'd have to live on ice."

"I know why he threw that firecracker at Mr. Burton." John felt too cross to find any fun in Jimmy's remark. "It was because Mr. Burton told his father about the windshield. Mr. Burton thinks *I* helped break it. Maybe he thinks I threw the firecracker. And I didn't do either."

"He can't blame you any more than the rest of us about the firecracker," comforted Jimmy.

"He'd *rather* think I threw it," was John's mournful reply. "You heard what he said to

me. I was going to tell him I didn't when that fireman chased us out of the Fire House. I wish Nelson White *would* make Howard Myers own up that he threw the firecracker, and write it down on a paper. Then, if Nelson showed the paper to Mr. Burton, he'd know I wasn't such a mean boy as he thought I was."

CHAPTER XV

NAMING THE HOUSE

THE Saturday after the Fourth brought the three Js a pleasant surprise in the shape of visitors. The noon train from the west left two little girls and a boy on the Lakeview station platform. They had hardly time to glance about them when they were greeted by their old friend, Mr. Hopkins, and piloted to his automobile. Into the car he whisked them amid the joyful giggles of the jubilant guests, Robert Wells, Helen Davis and Marjorie Mead.

Jimmy was weeding his garden and John had just finished an hour of piano practice and gone to the kitchen for a cruller, as a reward of merit, when his father drove up with the three children. Jimmy spied his city friends first and came running to meet them. John appeared on the veranda a moment later, a large sugared cruller in one hand, a pickle in the other.

He dropped the pickle in his surprise but managed to hang on to the cruller as he bounced buoyantly down the steps and rushed toward the children in the car. Jimmy was already opening the door of the tonneau for Helen and Marjorie, who were both talking at once in their high sweet voices.

"We're going to stay until Monday afternoon. Then we're going back on the train," Robert announced. "I'm sure you two boys never thought of seeing us to-day."

"No, we didn't." Jimmy smiled toward his father. "Daddy's a good secret keeper."

"So's Mother," echoed John. "You couldn't get either of them to tell when something nice is going to happen to us until it just happens."

"That's all the more fun," Helen said brightly as she gave John's hand an energetic shake. "My, what a lovely big house and yard! Oh, I'm sure we will have the *best* time here! Where is Junie?"

"Out in the chicken-yard with Doodle, probably," Jimmy replied.

"Who's Doodle?" three voices instantly asked.

John began to tell the little visitors about

Doodle. They all laughed at Junior's funny pet.

"We'll go to the house and see your mother first, then we can go and hunt Junie and see Doodle, can't we?" Robert said eagerly to John.

Just then Mrs. Hopkins came out on the veranda to welcome the week-end party of three. The guests had brought small bamboo suitcases with them and they felt quite important as they lugged them up the steps and into the house.

Mrs. Hopkins took the two little girls up-stairs to one of the spare bedrooms. Robert was to share John's and Jimmy's room with them. The three children hardly took more than time to set down their suitcases then hustled down-stairs and outdoors with the boys to see the glories of the Hopkins' delightful home.

They were half-way across the back yard, each supplied with a puffy sugared cruller like the one John had been nibbling, when Helen cried out and pointed toward the chicken-yard. "Oh, look!" She clapped her hands. Junior was walking slowly along by the outside of the high wire fence, holding up a cruller. After him, taking cautious little steps, came Doodle.

"That's the first time Junior ever coaxed him

to come outside the chicken-yard!" John cried excitedly.

The sound of loud voices and the noise made by the approaching visitors startled Doodle. He gave a hoarse, displeased squawk, did a queer teetering dance on one leg, flapped his wings and set off for the safety of the chicken-yard at a flying run.

"No-w-w-w!" Junior's voice rose high in disappointment.

"Oh, Junie, that's too bad!" Helen hurried to the little boy.

Junior had taken a few steps after Doodle. When he saw Helen running toward him he forgot all about his frightened rooster and met the little girl with outstretched arms.

Helen stooped down and caught Junior in her arms. She gave him a good hug which he returned with all his strength. Marjorie hugged him, too. Robert picked him up and swung him around and said: "Gracious, what a big boy you're getting to be!"

"I are as big as John and Jimmy pretty soon," he said proudly; "maybe in about two weeks."

"Oh, ho!" laughed Robert. "You'll have to

hurry and grow then. Show us the chickens, Junie. We want to see Doodle."

"A'right." Junior led the way to the chickenyard. Doodle was parading up and down one end of it as though he owned it. He looked suspiciously at the group of children, and, for once, would not come near Junior. Junior was not to be snubbed so easily. He trotted to the house and came back with his blouse pocket full of yellow corn. Doodle quickly forgot his fears and went so far as to peck corn from Junior's outstretched palm. The three city children thought this was wonderful.

Before the three J's could show their old-time playmates more of the place Mrs. Hopkins called them all to luncheon. After luncheon the six youngsters hurried outdoors again and spent a long happy afternoon together. So busy were they with their own fun they did not see Mr. Hopkins drive off in his car. It was nearly five o'clock when he went. When he came back he was not alone. On the front seat beside him was a boy who was smiling all over his freckled face.

As it happened the Hopkins' boys did not see the car when it returned. The children were down among the raspberry bushes gathering ber-

ries for a raspberry pudding which Netta had promised to make them the next day.

“As long as my boys haven’t seen you, Dick, you might as well keep out of sight until the party begins,” smiled Mr. Hopkins as he drove the car into the garage. “We’ll hustle to the house and Mrs. Hopkins will tuck you away somewhere until it’s time for you to come out.”

Mrs. Hopkins entered into the joke and hid Dick in a large closet off the dining-room. She and Netta were setting the table. It had a large centerpiece of pink roses and vases of pink roses at each end. From the middle of the tall centerpiece narrow pink satin ribbons ran to each place. At each place was a square white card with pink roses painted on it and a verse of poetry underneath the rose spray.

Dick peeped through the glass door of the closet and watched the setting of the table with deep interest. Mrs. Hopkins had put the youngster there because she knew that her boys could not come into the dining-room suddenly. The door opening into the hall was locked, and she and Netta were keeping an eye on the one leading into the kitchen. The day before Netta had baked

a large black chocolate cake and at that very moment there was a freezer of fresh peach ice-cream in the pantry. There were also plenty of other good things to eat which Netta had kept out of sight of the three Js. It looked as though something very pleasant was about to happen.

A few minutes before six the berry pickers trooped up to the kitchen door with the raspberries for the pudding. Netta met them on the back porch.

“Do yez be givin’ me them berries,” she said, “an’ go round the other way into the house. An’ it’s your hands an’ faces yez are to wash right away an’ then go sit on the front porch till yez are called to dinner.”

“Why can’t we go through the kitchen?” John demanded curiously. “Who said we had to ——”

“Ask me nothin’. It’s yer ma says for me to tell yez. Now do yez be good boys and don’t spoil ——” Netta stopped before she gave out any valuable information.

“Oh, hurray!” Jimmy cried. “It’s some kind of a nice surprise we’re going to have. Come on, kids. *We* don’t care if they *won’t* let us into the kitchen.”

“*Course* we don’t,” chimed in Marjorie and Helen. They turned their backs on the kitchen with a great flouncing of short skirts, pretending to be very much offended.

Half an hour afterward the six children with shining, rosy faces, clean hands, hair in order, lined up on the front steps to await the call to dinner and the surprise. Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins were both smiling broadly as they came out on the veranda, arm in arm.

“Once upon a time,” began Mr. Hopkins, “three boys I know thought they would like to give their house a name. They picked out ‘Happy House’ for a name, but something happened to them and their house wasn’t happy at all for a little while. So, of course, they couldn’t call their home ‘Happy House’ until they had set to work and made everything happy again. They tried hard after that trouble to keep things going smoothly, and they got along so well that ——”

“You’re going to let us name our house now! Oh, Daddy!” John and Jimmy said exactly the same words, and together. Both sprang up from the steps, their faces aglow.

“This is the best time for the naming party.

We have Robert and Helen and Marjorie here," John declared with enthusiasm.

"But not Dick." Jimmy's face fell. "We ought to have Dick, because we told him all about it and then had to tell him not to come when we—well—when we got mad at each other."

"That's so." John looked sober, too.

"But you didn't let me finish what I was saying," their father reminded.

"We guessed what you were going to say," John cried excitedly; "now didn't we?"

"Um, well, perhaps," teased Mr. Hopkins. "About Dick, though——"

"I'm right here." Dick dodged out from behind Mrs. Hopkins who had taken a stand squarely in front of the doorway. He had remained patiently in the closet until Mrs. Hopkins had suggested that he slip quietly to the front door behind herself and her husband and suddenly pop out of the doorway at John and Jimmy.

"Hi, this is great!" Jimmy pounced upon Dick and playfully shook him by the shoulders. "This is *some* party. Where did you come from I'd like to know?" John also welcomed Dick noisily.

“Your father came after me in the car and you fellows never saw us.” Dick beamed good nature at John and Jimmy.

Jimmy named the three city children in turn. Dick nodded with more smiles to each of them.

“Now that we’re all here, the procession may as well start,” declared Mr. Hopkins. He bowed and offered an arm to Marjorie, who giggled as she took it. Mrs. Hopkins chose Robert. Junior insisted on clinging to Helen’s arm. John, Dick and Jimmy brought up the rear, as happy a trio as could be found.

There were plenty of oh’s and ah’s from the children as they caught sight of the pretty pink and white table. Right beside the pink rose centerpiece stood a little cardboard house. It was painted dark green with white trimmings, and was exactly like their own house on a small scale. Over it waved a tiny white silk flag with “Happy House” painted on it in pink letters. At each place was a little pink and white straw basket filled with candy and perched on the basket handles were funny tiny animals made of papier-mâché. Junior had a rooster on his basket handle and John and Jimmy’s were yellow cats. Helen had a green frog, Robert and Marjorie

chuckled over two ugly-faced bulldogs and Dick's had a comical little monkey.

While they were all exclaiming over their favors and the cunning house in the center of the table Netta brought in the consommé for Mr. Hopkins to serve. After that came roast chicken with dressing and hot, flaky biscuits and jellies and half a dozen kinds of fresh vegetables. Then came the longed-for dessert of black chocolate cake and peach ice-cream. The children lingered over this, but finally the table was cleared of the dessert dishes and Netta brought in a tray on which was a large glass pitcher of fruit lemonade and glasses. She set the tray before Mrs. Hopkins and was about to go back to the kitchen when Mr. Hopkins said, "Wait a minute, Netta. You're in this, too."

"Of course she is. Netta does a great deal toward making our house happy." Mrs. Hopkins moved her own chair so that there was room at her end of the table for Netta to place a chair beside her. She made Netta sit down, then said to her husband, "I think we are ready now."

"Ahem!" Mr. Hopkins cleared his throat loudly, rolled his brown eyes, puffed out his chest and drew from his pocket a folded paper. "I'm

going to read you a poem I made up all by myself. Don't you laugh at me." He frowned and wagged a severe head at the tableful of youngsters who had begun to laugh the minute he spoke. "The name of this wonderful poem is 'The Road to Happy House.'" He then read:

"The road to Happy House, my dears, is never hard
to find,
If you but keep your tempers and never are unkind.
Cross words call imps and goblins forth and giants
grim and tall:—
They fill the road with shadows so you cannot see
at all.
They run and poke you in the ribs and pull you by
the nose;
They like to make you tumble down and spoil your
bestest clothes.
They tease you for they know you're cross and so
have lost the way,
To bright and cheerful Happy House where chil-
dren love to play."

There were several more verses to the poem. The eager young listeners were so pleased with it they made him read it through again to them. When he had gone through it the second time Mr. Hopkins said, "Happy House has a little present for each one of us. In return we are going to give it the present of its name. Because three

boys I know have tried so hard lately to be happy and keep happy we can give our house its name for good."

He rose from his chair and lifted the little green house from where it nestled under the nodding roses. He set it in front of Netta with a flourish.

"You may play Kriss Kringle, Netta," he told the astonished maid. "Open the front door of Happy House and fish out the presents. They had to be little ones, or the house wouldn't have held them. Each one's name is on his or her present."

"Oh, now, Mr. Hopkins, I can't be givin' out the prisents like you," Netta began to protest.

"Certainly you can. Go ahead and see if you can't."

Netta opened the tiny front door and slipped a hand inside the house. She pulled out a small square, flat package and looked it over for a name. In one corner was written "Marjorie." Marjorie clapped her hands with delight as Netta held the package out to her. She did not open it then. She waited for the others. Soon Helen had one the same shape and size as hers. One by one the toy house gave up its treasures until

everyone at the table, even to Mr. Hopkins, had a present.

They all had a good time opening the packages and admiring one another's gifts. Marjorie and Helen had received sets of dainty gold lace pins. Dick and Robert drew fountain pens, and John and Jimmy coin purses. Junior's present was a small flashlight. Mrs. Hopkins and Netta were both pleased with fancy gold pins and Mrs. Hopkins had remembered her husband with a set of gold cuff links.

After the presents were given out Mr. Hopkins stood up and made a funny speech to the little house on the table. He thanked the toy house for having been so generous. He then christened it Happy House.

"That means," he told the delighted children, "we have really named our big house. The little one here only stands for the big one. Now we'll ask Mother to pour us all a glass of fruit lemonade and we'll drink to the health and prosperity of Happy House."

The toast was drunk with plenty of cheering and flourishing of lemonade glasses. Afterward the naming party went into the living-room for a "sing." John had been taking piano lessons

for two years. He now played and the other children sang school songs.

"Let's go out and have a game of prisoner's base before dark," proposed Jimmy when they had sung most of the songs they knew. "We'll have time to play just about one game before it gets too dark to see where we're going."

"Marjorie and Helen ought to choose sides 'cause they're the girls, and company," John said.

"Yes, of course," nodded Jimmy. "Go ahead, girls."

Helen chose Dick and John and Marjorie chose Robert and Jimmy. Junior had dropped to sleep before the sing was over and lay cuddled up on the davenport in the living-room, so no one chose him.

At nine o'clock Dick had to go home. Mr. Hopkins took him in the car and the other children went along. On the way back they began to feel sleepy and when they came from the outside summer darkness into the white light of the hall they blinked like a group of young owls.

Robert was to sleep in the same bed with Jimmy during his visit. He had hardly touched the bed before he went fast asleep. Jimmy stayed awake long enough to say to John: "I'm

glad the house is named at last. Now, even if we aren't as good as we ought to be, we can't un-name it. Only we'll have to watch ourselves harder than ever to show Daddy and Mother that we're not going to lose our way to 'Happy House' like the poem said."

CHAPTER XVI

SUNSHINE

THE week after Marjorie, Helen and Robert visited the three Js, another visitor appeared at Happy House. Netta went home on the train for over Sunday. Mr. Hopkins had business in the city on Monday so he told Netta he would bring her back in the car on Monday afternoon. When the car rolled up the drive about five o'clock that afternoon, John and Jimmy were playing catch on the lawn. John spied the approaching car first. He ran across the grass toward it, whooping like an Indian.

"Hey, Tip! Good old Tip!" he yelled. "And did you come to see us, old boy?" He had caught sight of a rough-coated black and white dog on the back seat beside Netta.

"Bow-wow! Wow-wow-wow!" Tip returned John's greeting in a loud, joyful series of barks.

John and Jimmy had both reached the car by

this time and were holding open the door. Tip bounded out of the car, leaped upon the two boys in a wild frenzy of good spirits, and tried to lick their hands and faces with his rough tongue.

"It's crazy he is," Netta declared, laughing, as she got out of the car. "Be aisy, Tip. Don't yez try to eat up the boys. It's no manners yez has, at all, at all. Down, now, an' be shakin' hands pretty."

For once Tip paid no attention to his mistress.

"Little he cares for what I'm tellin' him. He's pleased enough to be turnin' himself inside out. I'll be lavin' him to yez two to manage. It's more than time I was in me kitchen and seein' to the dinner." Netta gave Tip's ragged head a fond pat and hurried toward the house.

Tip looked after her for a second, his head on one side. She did not look back or call to him so he renewed his leaps and prances about the boys. They hugged and wooled him to his heart's content.

"How long are you going to stay, Tip?" John asked the setter.

"Bow-wow!" Tip offered his paw.

"Let's see if he can do all the tricks he used to do. Sit up, Tip." Jimmy held up one hand

and snapped his fingers. Tip sat up like a gentleman. Jimmy next ordered him to play dead. Tip flopped down on the grass and stretched out stiffly. He lay still until Jimmy said, "Get up, Tip. You're alive again. Now show us how a lame dog walks." Tip had not forgotten this trick or several others which Jimmy put him through.

"I hope Tip stays all summer," was John's wish. "We ought to make him a house."

"We could make him one of a big packing box. There are some in the cellar."

"Let's make him one to-morrow after breakfast." John was taken with the idea of fixing Tip a house.

"No, *siree*, I can't." Jimmy's answer was decided. "I must weed my garden. You ought to weed yours."

"U-m-m—that's so. Well, we can make a dog house day after to-morrow."

Directly after breakfast the next day Jimmy went out to his garden to do some hard work. John lingered on the lawn to romp with Junior and Tip. Junior was so glad to see Tip he forgot Doodle for a while. So Doodle missed the after-breakfast treat which Junior always brought him.

“Hi, there, John,” Jimmy shouted to John from the middle of his garden, “you’d better get busy and go to weeding. I saw some weeds at the upper end of your garden that are about three feet tall.”

“I know it. I’m going to get at ’em pretty soon. I want to find Sunshine and Taffy first. I want to see what they think of Tip. They’ll have to get acquainted with him, you know, so they won’t scratch him.”

“Taffy’s in the garage,” Jimmy called back. “He’s watching for a mouse, or maybe a rat. I saw him when I went to get my hoe. Sunshine is ——” Jimmy stopped. He remembered that he had not seen Sunshine since early that morning. He had been rather careless in the past few days about keeping an eye on his pet. Still Sunshine had not been near the Myers’ chicken-yard that Jimmy knew of since Howard had frightened the big cat away.

John had already started for the garage with Junior and Tip at his heels. Before long he came over to where Jimmy was weeding, laughing as he ran.

“What do you think?” he cried. “Taffy put his back up high and walked clear across the

garage sideways when he saw Tip. He growled like everything and Tip was kind of afraid. He whined and wiggled and then he turned around and ran right out of the garage. I couldn't coax him into the garage again. He'd go as far as the door, then he'd bark a little and run back. I'm going to find Sunshine now and see how he's going to act."

John ran off on a hunt for Sunshine. He could not find the Angora puss so he and Junior took Tip out to the chicken park to see what he thought of the chickens. Tip charged briskly in among a group of hens that were enjoying a dish of soaked-up bread which Netta had just given them. They scattered in all directions with loud squawks of fright.

Tip ran a few steps after the fleeing hens. This frightened them more than ever. They hopped and half flew about the chicken-yard in a panic. Doodle gave a wild "Harrup!" as Tip ran past him and leaped straight into the air. This made John and Junior laugh. John called Tip to come out of the park and Junior tried to calm Doodle's fears, but the big rooster would not come near him.

"Doodle's 'fraid of me now. I are goin' to

get him a cracker; then he will like me again," Junior told John as they left the chicken-yard.

"All right. You go ahead and get Doodle a cracker, Junie. I've got to go pull weeds in my garden."

While John was introducing Tip to Taffy and the chickens Jimmy had made progress with his weeding. Almost half of his plot was clear. He was determined to stick to the task until he had finished it. He wished to have his garden in good trim before his father went away. Mr. Hopkins' vacation would be over in a week. He would not be home again until the middle of August and then only for a few days. By that time Jimmy's corn, beets, onions and perhaps the tomatoes would be ripe. John's radishes and string-beans would be ripened and gone before then.

John landed in his garden with a rush and a bounce. "My, you've a lot done, haven't you?" he exclaimed half enviously. "I'll have to hustle. Did you hear the chickens making a fuss? Tip scared 'em silly. You should have seen Doodle. Oh, ha, ha!" John burst out laughing. "He jumped right up in the air."

It was nearly four o'clock when Jimmy said, "There!" triumphantly and flipped a last bunch

of coarse grass onto the weed pile. "I'm going to cultivate my corn now. You won't find any weeds in my garden." He walked down among the rows of corn to where he had left the cultivator. He had stooped for it when the shrill, sharp clamor of frightened chickens made him straighten up quickly and glance toward the chicken-yard.

"Tip's in the chicken park again," he said to John. "Junie must have let him in. Why, no!" he continued in surprise; "there's Junie on the lawn with Tip. I wonder what's the matter with the chickens. Guess I'd better go and see."

"That racket's not in our park," John yelled after him. "It's over at Myers' park, I think."

Jimmy caught the words "Myers' park" and turned in a flash. Without a word he set off at top speed toward the Myers' chicken-yard. Yes, John was right. The noise was coming from there. The chickens were making a great fuss and someone was shouting, "Go after him! Shoot him, Dan!" Jimmy's heart gave a frightened leap. That was Howard Myers' voice. He and the hired man were after poor Sunshine. Jimmy was sure of it. It seemed as

though he could not get over the ground fast enough.

He reached the chicken park just as the hired man came running out of the garage, a shotgun in one hand. Howard was in the park, screaming at the man, Dan, to hurry. The gate to the park stood open. Jimmy dashed full tilt through the gateway. He had made up his mind as he ran to pick Sunshine up in his arms and run with him. The hired man would not then dare fire a shot for fear of hitting him.

"Hi, you, get out of here!" blustered Howard when he saw Jimmy.

Jimmy never even glanced at him. His eyes were on a broad streak of orange-yellow. It was tearing around and around the park sending the cowardly chickens fluttering in every direction. That streak was Sunny. But what was the matter with him? Then Jimmy saw Sunshine had something in his mouth that he was shaking with all his strength.

"He's got one of our chickens! Shoot him, Dan!" Howard ordered at top voice. "Hurry up now!"

"*He hasn't either,*" shouted Jimmy desperately. "He's caught a big rat. Don't you dare

fire at him!" Jimmy sprang toward Dan. His face was white; his eyes were blazing. "He's my cat. He never touches the chickens. He's worth a lot of money. You'd better be careful what you do to him."

Dan looked hard at angry Jimmy and lowered his gun. "Go easy now," he said not unkindly. "I ain't took no shot at him yet. Let's see what he's wallop in' round there in the dirt."

"It's a chicken," persisted Howard. "Aw, come on, Dan, or else give me that gun. I'll fix that old yellow cat." He sprang forward to take the gun from Dan's hands.

"Here, get away. Keep your hands off that gun. Yer paw don't 'low you to tech it, and you know it," rebuked Dan roughly, swinging the gun out of Howard's snatching reach. "That yaller cat has got a rat; a whoppin' big one, too. He's some cat, he is."

"Ah-h-h-h!" Jimmy gave a long sigh of relief as he heard these words. He started toward Sunshine who was still shaking the rat. Suddenly the big cat gave it a final shake and flipped it into the air. It hit the ground in front of him and lay still. Instantly he pounced upon it, growling.

“Why, Sunny, you good old fellow, you did catch a rat, didn’t you?” Jimmy advanced cautiously toward Sunshine. He wished to pick his pet up and get away from the Myers’ chicken park in a hurry. As Jimmy stretched forth his hands, Sunshine eluded them, caught up the rat and trotted off with it toward one end of the park. “I’m not going to take away your rat, Sunny. You and I’ll take it home. Come here,” coaxed Jimmy, following the cat.

“Yes, take your old cat and go home.” Howard was very angry at the way things had turned out. “He catches chickens, just the same. He only happened to catch that rat to-day.” Howard had raised his voice to a scream.

“He *doesn’t* catch chickens, and you know it.” Jimmy turned on Howard in a flash of just wrath. “You only say that to be mean. You think my brother John told about you breaking the windshield. Well, he didn’t. The man in the store down by the lake saw you break it. That isn’t the only thing you did to Mr. Burton, either. What about the firecracker you threw under his feet over at the Fire House?” Jimmy’s own tones had risen.

“What—what—who says I——” Howard

began. He ran toward Jimmy, his face red as a poppy.

"What's the matter here?" a new, very loud voice suddenly asked. Into the chicken park strode Howard's father. His heavy eyebrows were drawn in a deep frown. "What mischief are you up to now, sir?" He reached in front of Howard and half reached out toward him.

"I haven't done a thing," Howard shouted, ducking away from his father.

"What are you doing with that gun, Dan?" Mr. Myers' glance roved to the hired man. "What's going on here?"

"Oh, nothin' much. Mr. Howard said a big cat was after the chickens and so I went after the shotgun," Dan replied somewhat lamely. "The cat wa'n't after nothin' but a rat, though. He got it, too."

"Well, I never!" Mr. Myers had caught sight of Jimmy and Sunshine now. Jimmy was bending down, patting Sunshine. Sunny was still growling softly, his forepaws on the rat's body. "Whose boy are you, and is that your cat?" asked the banker.

"I'm Jimmy Hopkins and I live over there,"

Jimmy said rather stiffly and pointed toward his home. "This is my cat, Sunshine."

"So you are my neighbor." Mr. Myers' harsh tones softened. He liked the looks of the sturdy, blue-eyed boy who answered him so directly. "I don't suppose you'd care to sell your cat, would you? We need one here that is a real ratter. The rats have been troublesome here this summer."

"I wouldn't sell Sunshine for all the money in the world," Jimmy said energetically. He smiled a little as he said it. "I'm glad he caught the rat, but I'd rather he'd stay at home. Only, if he should ever come over here again, he's not looking for chickens. He walks in our chicken-yard whenever he wants to and never touches a single chicken. He's a good cat and very bright. We'd feel awful if—if anything bad happened to him."

"I see he's a full-blooded Angora. He's welcome to come over here if he wants to. Nothing bad will happen to him on these premises. I wish he would come over often and catch a few of these pests." Mr. Myers bent down and said, "Let me see your catch, old yellow lad."

Sunshine objected a little, then let Mr. Myers

pick up the dead rat by the tail. It was as large as a half-grown kitten.

Howard had been listening to his father and Jimmy with his mouth half open. He was completely taken back by the way things were going. Dan had quietly slipped out of the chicken-yard and gone back to the garage. He felt rather cheap over his share in the recent excitement.

While Mr. Myers was inspecting the dead rat Jimmy gathered Sunshine into his arms. He dared not glance toward Howard for fear he would laugh. He knew Howard was too greatly afraid of his father to say a word against Sunshine.

"I think I'd better go. Please may Sunshine have the rat? I think he'd like it." Jimmy spoke rather shyly. He did not wish to be rude, but he was anxious to get away.

"Certainly, certainly." Mr. Myers handed the rat to Jimmy who had some trouble holding to it and Sunshine, too. He finally had to set Sunshine down, he thrashed about so energetically.

"I'll have to coax him home with the rat, I guess." Jimmy walked a few steps toward the gate, dangling the rat before Sunny's eyes.

Sunshine trotted briskly after his hard-earned trophy.

“Good-bye, Mr. Myers.” Jimmy paused just inside the gateway. “Thank you for what you just said about Sunshine.” He did not look at Howard.

“You’re welcome, my boy. Come and see us again,” was the hearty response. “Remember your cat won’t be hurt if he comes over here.”

“Thank you, sir,” Jimmy said again. He walked on, Sunshine following. John met him at the fence that divided their lot from the Myers’ property. On account of his trouble with Howard he had hung back. He had no idea of what had really happened or he would have hustled over to Myers’ to help Jimmy fight for Sunshine. He had hung around near the fence waiting till Jimmy came back.

“I wish I’d gone, too,” John said over and over as Jimmy told him what had happened. “I wouldn’t have been afraid of that old fatty Howard. My, if you hadn’t got there when you did the hired man might have shot Sunshine!”

“I don’t believe he would have.” Jimmy shook a positive head. “He seemed to like Sunny. He said he was ‘some cat.’ Maybe I

shouldn't have said what I did to Howard about the firecracker, but I was so mad at him. His father is a fine man. It's too bad Howard is such a mean boy. Probably his father would like to feel proud of him, but he can't because he acts so. Anyway, I'm glad Sunny is safe and won't ever be hurt if he goes over there again. One thing's sure, Dan won't hurt him, and Howard daren't."

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAVE DWELLERS

BEFORE Mr. Hopkins went away he gave the boys' gardens a careful looking over and pronounced Jimmy's considerably ahead of John's. Junior's garden had become nothing more than a weed patch.

Hardly a day passed now without bringing Dick; sometimes for only an hour; sometimes to spend a whole morning or afternoon. Occasionally the Hopkins boys went to Dick's house to play, but their own home was the best place for good times on account of the large space they had to run in. The three boys played catch and practiced running bases every day. Most of Dick's school chums were away on vacations, but they would be back to Lakeview early in August. The boys were then going to organize their great baseball team. They had already named their team the "Winners."

"I wish it would hurry up and be August,"

sighed Dick one sunny July morning. He and John and Jimmy had thrown themselves down under a huge elm tree to rest after doing some spirited base running.

"We'll be about the best players on the team because we've practiced the most," John predicted.

"Sure we will," agreed Dick, "only I get tired of practicing all the time with just three of us. I'm kind of tired of most everything we play." Dick jumped up from the grass and began turning a series of handsprings. He presently keeled over and landed almost in Jimmy's lap. "Let's go over in the field and fly your kite, Jimmy," he suggested.

"All right. Wait till I go and get it." Jimmy started amiably toward the house for his kite. He soon reappeared with it and the trio set out for a broad, gently-sloping meadow not far below Happy House.

"It doesn't go up worth a cent," John said disgustedly after the three had made half a dozen attempts to fly the big blue kite and had failed to keep it in the air. "There isn't a speck of breeze."

"I wish we had a cave. I was reading a dandy

story last night about some boys who had a cave in the side of a hill. They dug it out and fixed it themselves. They used to go there and sit and tell fairy stories and have parties and all that." Dick spoke eagerly. "I wish there was a hill around here. We'd dig a cave, too. But all the hills are far from here."

"We could have a cave, anyway." Jimmy was seized with a bright idea.

"How?" Dick and John said in the same breath.

"Well, we could dig a great big hole in the ground, and then we could put some boards on top of it and put dirt and grass over the boards and leave a place at one side to crawl in and out of. The boards would keep the dirt from coming down on us and the grass on top of them would make it look like the rest of the grass around where the cave was dug."

"That's so; we could." Dick promptly fell in with this idea. "We could dig it right in this field and nobody would care."

"The man it belonged to might," John said prudently.

"It doesn't belong to a man. My father says it belongs to an old lady who lives in New York.

She never comes here. The kids have used it for a playground for a long while."

"We could dig one on our lot, but a cave over here would be more fun. We could take off the roof and fill up the hole again when we got tired of the cave," planned Jimmy. "We'd only have fun and not do any harm."

"'Course we wouldn't. Nobody'd say a word to us. I'm sure of that," Dick returned positively. "Let's find a good place now for the cave and start digging this morning. How many shovels have you at your house?"

"Oh, three or four." It was John who answered. "We've all kinds of tools in the garage. We can bring the ones we need over here, only we'll have to always remember to take 'em back."

Delighted with the cave idea the three youngsters trotted around the meadow in an earnest hunt for a suitable spot for the cave. They finally chose one at the left-hand side of the meadow on a slight rise of ground. It did not take long to run back to Happy House for the necessary tools. John carried two spades, Dick, a spade and a hoe and Jimmy, a pickaxe.

All the rest of that hot July morning the cave-diggers worked like beavers. At lunch time Dick

telephoned his mother and asked permission to stay at Happy House for luncheon. The moment the three boys had finished eating back they hurried to their digging.

That was the first day of a week of hard labor. They planned the cave on a large scale and it took time to carry out the plan. They even got a wheelbarrow and dumped the dirt from the hole they dug in one corner of the meadow. Dick had been sure no one would interfere with them, and no one did.

It took one whole day to lug light boards from a pile behind the Hopkins' garage over to the meadow. These boards served as a roof for the cave. The boys had carefully saved the grass sod they had dug up. The boards were to be hidden by a layer of dirt and the sod placed on top of that.

"Where the cave is doesn't look like the rest of the grass now 'cause the grass we dug up's wilted. After it rains on it two or three times it will look just the same." This was Dick's opinion after the last sod had been stuck in place and the cave diggers stood viewing their work with admiration.

"Oh, nobody will notice it," John said.

“When the grass gets green again it will be a secret cave. You can hardly tell now where the doorway is. To-morrow let’s have a party here. We’ll bring a book and something to eat and some candles to see by, and have a fine time.”

“I’ll bring ‘The Fort in the Forest.’ That’s a good story,” offered Jimmy. “When the fellows come back they’ll think our cave is great.”

“We’ll ask Nelson and Charlie and Merritt Wade first of all. They are the nicest fellows in our crowd,” Dick said.

“I’m glad the cave’s done. *I’ve* worked hard enough.” John rubbed the palms of his hands, grown hard from holding a shovel. “If Howard Myers knew about this cave maybe he’d come and spoil it.” This alarming thought happened to cross John’s mind.

“He never comes over here,” Dick replied a little anxiously. “Look how long we’ve been digging the cave and we’ve never seen him over this way once. We’ll make our fellows keep the cave a secret.”

The next afternoon John and Dick and Jimmy had a wonderful time sitting on soap boxes in the dark and somewhat damp recesses of their cave, feasting on sugar cookies and bananas and

reading "The Fort in the Forest" by candle-light. Junior came to the party, but went back on the cave after he had been in it five or ten minutes. Jimmy had to take him home as he could not be trusted to go so far alone.

Both the Hopkins boys and Dick were so well pleased with the cave they would have liked to go and live in it. They often talked about what fun it would be to stay in it over night. All three knew better than to ask permission of their parents to do so. John and Jimmy had been rather surprised that Mrs. Hopkins had not questioned them about their cave. They had talked of nothing else at meals, yet not once had she asked where it was or whether they had had permission to dig it in the meadow. Mrs. Hopkins' mind, as it happened, had not been on caves. She and Netta were busy with the summer canning and preserving, and there had also been a dressmaker at the house for two weeks.

The first days of August brought Nelson White, Charlie Newton and Merritt Wade back to Lakeview. They hailed the cave with joy and the six members of the Winners baseball team made it their headquarters. The three other boys they had picked for the team were still away, but

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would be home the last of that week. Until they should arrive on the scene the six chums practiced hard every pleasant day in the meadow. After such strenuous practice it was great fun for the lively sextette to squeeze themselves into the cave and there eat quantities of ginger and sugar cookies, doughnuts, fruit or whatever each could most easily beg from his home kitchen. They played they were robbers; tramps; early settlers hiding from the Indians. Each brought a few of his most cherished books from home and they made a bookshelf of two smooth pieces of board to hold them. As they sat munching their picnic lunches they took turns reading from a book.

“We certainly can play ball,” Nelson White declared warmly one cool August morning as the players gathered around him for a brief rest after some spirited work. Dick alone had not joined them.

“We’re a good swift team.” Charlie Newton wagged his head complacently. “Wonder what’s the matter with Dick? Maybe his father made him stay home and clean up store.”

“Here he comes now! See him; way across the meadow?” Jimmy pointed.

“ Yes, and he’s carrying a basket, and walking slow as can be. I see where we have some dandy eats.” Merritt Wade smacked his lips.

“ Guess what I’ve got,” hailed Dick.

His chums guessed in concert. Each said something different.

“ Not one of you said it. Look!” He lifted a fluff of paper napkins and showed the boys six fat, brown little pies.

“ Oh, um; don’t they smell good?” Nelson caught a whiff of their spicy fragrance.

“ They’re blackberry pies, and they’re stuffed full of berries. My mother made ’em just for us. I had to wait till they were baked. That’s why I was late,” Dick explained. “ We’d better eat ’em while they’re warm. They taste so good and fresh then.”

“ Yes, ’cause it’s quite a while till lunch time,” John said. “ We can finish the ‘ Voyage of the Seabird ’ while we’re eating ’em.”

“ After that we’ll practice again. It’s nice and cool, so it’s a fine day to work.” Jimmy’s ambition was to have a perfect team.

John and Jimmy and Dick had soon found reading by candle-light most trying to their eyes. Dick had brought a large, old-fashioned lantern

from home which was just what they needed. When they wanted to read they set a soap box on end in the middle of the cave and placed the lantern upon it.

One after another the chums doubled themselves and disappeared into the mouth of the cave. Dick brought up the rear with the pies. By the time he was in Jimmy had the lantern set up and was lighting it while Nelson already had the "Voyage of the Seabird" in his hand. He began the reading but took a large bite from his pie before he started. The others plentifully smeared their hands and faces with the juicy dainty as they listened to the absorbing story.

" 'Man the boats! She's going to smash on the rocks! ' " read Nelson. " 'The sailors worked desperately and the boats were soon lowered. They had scarcely got into them and away from the plunging ship when she went to her doom. Crash!! Crash!! ' "

But the "crash!!" was not only in the story. From directly over their heads came a crash so sudden and startling three boys and their soap boxes upset. They heard a snapping and cracking of boards; little showers of dirt filtered down the cave's sides. A general howl went up from

the cave dwellers. Up above them they caught sounds of voices; one very loud and wrathful.

“Hi, there!” Nelson poked his head out of the mouth of the cave like an inquiring turtle. He suddenly dropped back into the cave and whispered in a half-frightened way, “It’s Mr. Burton. He’s sitting on top of the cave. I guess maybe he fell down.”

There was a second of silence among the cave dwellers, then Dick giggled softly. That started the others and they all laughed under their breath. Just then the boards creaked and cracked again. A little more dirt fell. Mr. Burton was getting to his feet. Next instant he stood before the cave’s mouth calling angrily, “Come out of that hole, you youngsters. I know you’re in there!”

CHAPTER XVIII

BOY FRIENDS

“WE’LL have to do as he says.” Jimmy blew out the lantern, set it in a niche they had made for it near the mouth of the cave and dropped to his hands and knees.

“So *there* you are! This is a *nice smart* thing you young vandals have been up to, isn’t it? Who told you you could dig up my meadow and make a man-trap of it? I might have broken my leg.” Mr. Burton looked as though he would like to take Jimmy and shake him. The young man with him looked as though he would like to laugh.

One by one the other boys appeared in time for the scolding the angry man was roaring out. John came out of the cave last. When Mr. Burton saw him he said, “Aha; so it’s you, sir! I might have known it. Always to be found where there’s mischief, aren’t you? This is the third time I’ve caught you at something.”

“Mr. Burton,” Jimmy sprang to John’s de-

fense, "my brother isn't to blame for things you think he is at all. He ——"

"No, I'm *not*!" John almost shouted. "I *didn't* break your windshield, or throw a single stone! I *didn't* throw that firecracker! This cave ——" John stopped stammeringly. "I helped make it, but we didn't know ——"

"Of course you didn't." Mr. Burton spoke very disagreeably. "*You* never do any of this mischief, but you're always right there when it happens. I dare say you put these other boys up to it, and that's worse yet. I'm going to see your father about you and ask him to take you in hand. That ——"

"Our father isn't at home now," began Jimmy. "When he does come home ——"

"Now that will do." Mr. Burton held up his hand at Jimmy. "You're too ready to talk."

"John isn't to blame." Dick now spoke for his chum. "He ——"

"No, he isn't," came in indignant chorus from the other three boys. They all began to defend John at once.

"Stop it. Not another word." Mr. Burton turned fiercely upon the boys. "Now you listen to what I have to say. Don't one of you ever

dare set foot on this meadow again. It belongs to me and I'm going to make a golf course of it. I'll have this hole filled up at once before another person steps on it and falls. The idea of tearing up the ground like that! It's simply outrageous! Now run along, all of you, and be glad I am letting you off so easy. Go on; skip!"

Not one of the boys started. Each was remembering the treasure within the cave.

"We've some of our things in the cave." Jimmy eyed the big man almost defiantly. He was smarting under the injustice done John and all of them, and he showed it. Man and boy stared at each other for a long minute.

"Get them out." Mr. Burton's frown relaxed a little. He gave one hand an impatient wave toward the cave.

Jimmy beckoned to Nelson. "I'll go in and get the stuff and hand it out to you," he said.

It was a very quiet company which stood there while the boys' belongings were being handed to Nelson. Two or three times during the process the young man with Mr. Burton walked a little way off, then came back again. Dick, watching him curiously, was sure he was laughing.

Jimmy brought out even the soap boxes.

These came last. By the time they were out Mr. Burton did not look quite so cross.

"That's all." Jimmy looked squarely at Mr. Burton. "We're sorry you fell. We *did not* know it was your field. We thought no one would care if we made a cave here. We were going to put all the dirt back when we were through playing with it. We won't come here again. If you will come to see my father about John he will be glad to talk with you. He knows John never tells what's not true."

Jimmy picked up an armful of books and a soap box and turned abruptly away. "Come on, fellows," he said to his companions.

The others divided the cave's furnishings and the little procession started across the field. Not a boy looked back.

"That boy who talked up to you is a pretty fine sort," remarked the young man to Mr. Burton as the big man stood shaking his head at the cave. While the greater part of the roof had held up under Mr. Burton's weight he had broken through several light boards directly in the center of the roof. That part now sagged considerably below the rest of the roof.

"Humph!" was all Mr. Burton returned.

The crestfallen cave dwellers, who had now lost their cave, trudged on, sympathizing with John as they went.

"It's just as I said," cried Nelson White. "We'll have to fix a paper and make Howard Myers sign it and then give it to Mr. Burton."

"But that's like telling tales," Jimmy said with a frown.

"Well, is it right for Mr. Burton to believe John did things when we know he didn't? We have to prove that and then show Mr. Burton the proof. He knows Howard Myers threw stones, but he thinks John threw them, too. He's not sure which one of 'em broke the windshield. He thinks all of us were in that firecracker business." Dick was serious for once.

"We can't *prove* Howard threw the firecracker," John said gloomily.

"I know he had one," Nelson said. "One of the freshies who was with him at the picnic told me he gave him a big firecracker and that Howard told him he was going to throw it close to a man he didn't like."

"The only way we can do with Howard is to fight him," proposed Merritt. "It wouldn't be fair for all us kids to start at him."

“Oh, we couldn’t do that,” Nelson replied hastily. “I’m not afraid to fight him, but my mother doesn’t want me to have fist fights with the boys. She says it’s the wrong way to do unless you have to defend yourself.”

The chums tried to think of different plans to make Howard Myers own up to his misdoings and clear John. They could think of nothing within their power to do. Dick decided to himself that he would not give up thinking about it until he had found a way.

All of a sudden Nelson began to laugh. He laughed and kept on laughing until he nearly cried. “Oh, you ought to have seen how funny Mr. Burton looked,” he said when he could straighten his face enough to talk. “He sat on the top of the cave and looked so mad. It scared me so when he sat down on the roof I dropped what was left of my pie on the floor.”

“I had one big bite left and I swallowed it too quick,” chuckled Charlie. “It gave me the throatache.”

“Yes, and just when we were reading about the *Seabird* going to smash, Mr. Burton smashed our roof,” laughed Merritt Wade.

The funny side of their trouble which they

could not help seeing brightened them up. Still, they had lost their zeal for practice for the day. They did a little work in the Hopkins' yard, but Charlie, Nelson, Merritt and Dick went home at lunch time.

The brothers told their mother of the cave disaster at luncheon. She could not help laughing a little but said, "I feel that I'm to blame for not paying more attention to you when you first spoke of digging this cave. If your father had been here he would not have allowed you to dig one outside your own premises. Never dig up a foot of land that belongs to anyone else, boys. Remember that."

The next day the chums played ball in the Hopkins' yard, but the day after that none of the four boys appeared. John and Jimmy spent a restless morning and afternoon wondering what had happened to their chums. Jimmy telephoned Dick's house twice in the afternoon, but both times Mrs. Carter said Dick was out with the boys.

In the meantime Raymond Alden, one of the boys who was to play on the team, came home from the mountains on the day of the cave disaster. He was anxious to see his chums and went

around among them that evening inviting them to a swimming party at the lake the next day. Raymond had not included John and Jimmy in the invitation. He did not know them. They had not met him the day of the school party and he had gone away to the mountains soon afterward. Like Dick, Nelson and Charlie were allowed to go swimming in Rainbow Lake. Merritt was not allowed to go into the water but he had not been forbidden to go down to the lake shore. He joined Raymond's swimming party as an onlooker.

As there were no bath houses at the lake the swimmers dressed at home in their one-piece bathing suits. Over them they slipped their rain-coats. To see a rain-coated party of boys scampering through the streets of Lakeview on a fine sunny day was to see a swimming party bound for Rainbow Lake.

There were nine boys in Raymond's party counting Merritt. Eight of them dived off the spring-board, one after another. Merritt sat on the sandy shore in the sun and carried on a shouted conversation with his chums. While the fun was at its height three boys came down to the lake shore and stood watching the swimmers.

One of them was Howard Myers. The other two were his particular chums, Fred Bates and Wallace Gray. Fred and Wallace wore rain-coats. Howard had on a linen suit, but he carried a bundle under one arm which suggested a bathing suit. Long since he had been forbidden by his father to go swimming in Rainbow Lake as he was a poor swimmer. He disobeyed the order whenever he felt like it and was sure that his father would not hear of it. On this account he never dared put on his bathing suit at home.

Near the lake shore not far from the spring-board was a stand kept by an old man. His name was Mr. Riley and he sold popcorn, peanuts, candy and soft drinks. There was a room back of the one used as a stand and in this Mr. Riley lived. Howard used to pay the old man a quarter for allowing him to use this back room as a dressing-room.

“Go and get on your swimming togs, Myers,” said Fred with a displeased glance at Raymond’s party. “We’ll chase these fresh little snips right out of the water. There’ll be no chance at the spring-board with them around.”

“All right. I’ll be back in a minute.” Howard turned and started toward the stand. When

he drew near to it he saw it was closed. Mr. Riley was away. "Oh, bother!" he exclaimed. He went up to the door and shook it and pounded on it. He tried to get in at a side window but it was locked. Then he remembered there was a little back porch to the shack covered with vines. He decided he would go there and change his clothes. Ten minutes later he was heading for the spring-board with his friends. They were bent on driving the younger boys away from it.

"Come on, you kids, clear out," ordered Wallace, almost walking into a group of five boys gathered at the base of the spring-board.

"We're not going to clear out," Nelson White returned coolly. "If you want to use the spring-board, go ahead. We're not in your way."

Four boys of Raymond's party were in the water. They were near enough to shore to hear Wallace's and Fred's gruff tones. They hustled out of the lake to join their chums. It was a case of nine against three and three were cowardly.

"You'd better keep out of our way." Fred saw that it would be safer to move on. He scowled at the boys he disliked and went on out

on the spring-board. Howard and Wallace followed him.

"Howard Myers' father would be mad if he knew Howard was in swimming," Charlie Newton said. "A boy told me Howard wasn't allowed to go swimming in the lake. He goes and changes to his bathing suit at Mr. Riley's stand. He always comes to the lake all dressed in a suit he wears every day."

"Mr. Riley's not home to-day." Raymond glanced at the closed stand. "How did he get in to change?"

"I don't think he got in. He must have changed to his bathing suit on the back porch," guessed Charlie. "It's all covered with vines."

Dick had been listening to his chums without saying a word. A brilliant idea had popped into his head. "I'll be back in a minute," he suddenly said, and ran off toward the stand. The boys were used to Dick's unexpected moves. They did not bother to ask him where he was going. The spring-board was now clear of Howard and his companions so they resumed their diving from it.

Dick had already reached the back porch of the shack. He glanced eagerly about it and gave

a satisfied cluck as his eyes fell on a neat heap of clothing under a wooden bench. He pounced upon it and flitted away with it. Presently he returned empty-handed to his chums.

“I found Howard Myers’ clothes on Mr. Riley’s back porch under a bench,” he announced gleefully. “I hid ’em. He can’t have ’em again until he owns up before us all that John didn’t throw a single stone. He’ll have to own up about the firecracker, too.”

CHAPTER XIX

DICK'S WAY

DICK's chums stared at him in deep admiration. They were amazed at his daring. Then they found their voices and raised them in a joyous whoop. Dick grinned widely at this applause. "I knew I'd find a way to make him own up," he said.

"But we haven't any paper down here for him to write on!" exclaimed Nelson White, "and there's no place near here where we can get any."

"We don't want a paper," Dick said sturdily. "We've got to make Mr. Burton take our word for it."

"How are we going to see him?" asked Nelson. "He wouldn't pay any attention to us. We could send him the paper in a letter."

"I've been thinking about it a lot," Dick returned, "and I think we ought to go to his house and see him. He believes we are boys like Howard. We've got to speak up for ourselves and

tell him we aren't. I don't mean you, Raymond, or you, George and Harry. It's the rest of us he thinks are no good. We'll make Howard own up first. Then we'll give him back his clothes and we'll go over to Mr. Burton's house in a bunch. It'll be after five o'clock by the time we get there, so he'll probably be home. We'll tell him what Howard said, and about John. If he says he doesn't believe us, we'll have to keep talking to him till he does." Dick's merry face took on a stubborn look. He was in dead earnest.

"If Howard can't find his clothes maybe he'll go home in his bathing suit," said Raymond. "Maybe he'd rather do that than own up."

"No siree," laughed Dick; "he wouldn't walk home in that red and blue bathing suit for anything. He's so fat, everybody would yell and laugh at him. Besides his father might see him. He hasn't a rain-coat and there isn't a place around here where he can get any clothes to put on. Mr. Riley's away, so he can't give Howard any."

At a little before five Howard and his chums came out of the water to stay out. Howard at once hurried toward the stand. He came run-

ning back in about ten minutes, his fat face full of alarm. "Someone's stolen my clothes!" he exclaimed. "I've got to be home by six. My two cousins are coming to our house to dinner. Let me take your rain-coat, Fred. You can wait here. I'll send it back to you."

"Yes, you will," jeered Fred. "You'd forget it the minute you got home. No, sir. I need my coat. Think I'm going to walk home in my trunks and be laughed at?"

Wallace was equally disobliging. He merely laughed at Howard's plea.

"You're a pair of stingies!" Howard at last cried out angrily. He started back toward the stand not knowing what to do.

Half-way to the stand he met nine boys. They had seen him coming and had drawn up in a group to meet him. "Get out of my way," he said crossly, but did not stop.

"You'd better stop a minute," advised Dick. "I know where your clothes are; we all do."

Howard stopped with a jerk. "Where are they?" he asked in surprise. It suddenly dawned upon him that these boys were to blame for their disappearance. He grew red in the face and shouted angrily, "Course you know! You hid

'em! You go and get 'em this minute." He advanced threateningly on Dick.

Dick moved not an inch. "I'm the one that hid them," he said with a sober face. "I'll tell you why." He went on to tell Howard what he must do to earn the return of his missing clothing.

Howard did not relish Dick's plan. He blustered and sputtered and scolded and said, "No," flatly at first. It grew later and later. Still Dick held out against him. Howard dared not try to start a fist fight for Dick was too well supported. He saw, too, that the other boys were not angry, but determined. Finally he gave in.

"What do I care what old grouch Burton thinks of me?" he said at last. "I'm glad I broke his windshield. No; that Hopkins baby didn't throw a stone. How could he? He wasn't out of the car. His papa wouldn't let him," Howard jeered in a shrill, babyish tone. "I threw the firecracker, and I'm glad of that, too. Now run and tell on me. You'll wish you hadn't."

Before Howard had finished talking Dick was off at a run. He appeared from around a corner of the shack in a couple of minutes with Howard's clothing. Howard snatched it with a kind of gulp and hustled toward the back porch of the

shack. It was almost six o'clock, but he thought he might make up an excuse for being late, now that he had his clothes again.

Mr. Burton was sitting at one corner of his handsome, spacious veranda reading the evening papers when the sound of approaching voices caused him to raise his head. A little company of boys was coming up the white stone walk to the veranda. They paused at the bottom step and looked over toward him, then they came on.

"Good-evening, Mr. Burton," Dick greeted politely. "We'd like to say something to you."

"Well, what is it?" The big man spoke quickly, but not gruffly. His eyes traveled shrewdly from face to face. He recognized a part of the cave dwellers, but missed John's and Jimmy's faces.

"It's—it's about Howard Myers and—and John Hopkins." Dick had thought it would be easy enough to tell Mr. Burton about John. Now he hardly knew what to say next. He paused, then said, "I guess I'd better tell you first about the day Howard Myers broke your windshield." With this start Dick found it easier to talk. It was not long before Mr. Burton had

heard a story which made him raise his shaggy brows and exclaim, "Humph!" and "Well, well, well!"

"We were going to make Howard sign a paper that John wasn't to blame and send you the paper," Nelson White said when Dick stopped abruptly at the end of his story, "but Dick said you ought to take the word of nine boys."

"We want you to believe us, 'cause then you'll believe John," Dick declared candidly. "John's a truthful boy, and so is Jimmy. Folks says I'm mischievous, but I wouldn't do the kind of things Howard Myers does, or say what isn't true. None of us would. We wouldn't say anything to you against Howard if we didn't know you knew some things about him already. We'd tell you John wasn't to blame, but we wouldn't say who the other boy was." Dick drew a long breath after this speech.

"I see how things are." Mr. Burton's tones were really pleasant. "Well, boys, I believe you. I'm glad to hear your friend John Hopkins is a truthful boy. I haven't had a very good opinion of him. You took the right way in coming to see me. That was far better than to make young Myers sign a paper. If you'll sit down on the

veranda and wait a few minutes I'll try to make it right with your chum, John."

"What do you s'pose he's going to do?" whispered Merritt to Dick. Mr. Burton had said, "Excuse me, boys," most courteously, and gone inside the house.

"I think he's going to write John a letter," was wise Dick's guess after a moment or two.

Surely enough, Mr. Burton presently returned, an envelope in one hand. It was addressed to "Master John Hopkins." "Here you are, youngsters." He handed the letter to Dick. "Give it to John and ask him to read it to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Burton." Dick placed the precious letter in the pocket of his rain-coat. "I guess we'd better go. We have to see John yet and it's most supper time. We'll have to hurry."

"All right, boys. Thank you for coming. I think we understand one another a little better than we did. You'll hear from me again." Mr. Burton's smile was very kindly now. His eyes twinkled a little as he viewed the group of bright-faced boys.

"Yes, sir," they all said. "Good-bye, Mr. Burton." Led by Dick they turned and went promptly away. Mr. Burton watched them go

down the walk and out the gate. "Well, well, well!" he said again. "They certainly got the best of young Myers." He threw back his head and laughed as he had not laughed for a long time.

CHAPTER XX

HOME IS BEST

"I SEE where I miss the movies to-morrow night," Dick remarked as the nine started for Happy House. "I'm going to be home awful late for supper, but I can't help it."

John and Jimmy happened to be out on their veranda when their chums turned in at their gate. They were almost as much surprised as Mr. Burton had been. They darted to meet the group of boys like twin arrows from a bow. Dick twirled the letter before John's eyes, then handed it to him. "The one who wrote it said for you to read it to us," he told John.

"Yes, open it," echoed the other boys.

"Who wrote it?" quizzed John as he drew the letter from the envelope and unfolded it. Jimmy was also eyeing the mysterious letter with interest.

"You'll know when you come to the end of it," Nelson said impatiently.

“I’m going to look at the end first.” John did so and gave an amazed “Why-ee!”

The boys all began to laugh. Jimmy could not resist looking over John’s shoulder. He puckered his lips in a surprised whistle. John began to read in a queer, unbelieving tone:

“MASTER JOHN HOPKINS:

“Dear young friend:—I am writing this letter to you to ask you to pardon me for not having taken your word when you and your father came to see me, and afterward at the Hose House. I am glad to know that you are the right kind of boy and have friends as honest as yourself to stand up for you. I have decided not to make a golf ground of the meadow this summer, so you and your chums may keep your cave to play in. I hope you will have many good times there.

“Yours sincerely,
“ELWOOD BURTON.”

The ringing cheer that went up from the happy boys brought Mrs. Hopkins from the living-room to the front door to see what was going on.

In the midst of the rejoicing Dick remembered that time was flying and that he ought to be

home. "I've just got to go," he said reluctantly. "Good-bye, John and Jimmy."

Dick turned and hurried down the walk. His companions went, too.

"I'm going to show this letter to Mother right away." John looked proud importance. "Dick is a fine chum, isn't he?"

"All the fellows are fine," declared Jimmy with emphasis.

"I wish Father was home now so I could show him my letter," John said regretfully.

John took his letter to the dinner table and read it to his mother and Junior. Junior was not impressed by it. He had managed to lead Doodle once around the chicken-yard that afternoon by a long red ribbon and he was anxious to tell about that triumph. John thought Netta ought to hear the letter, too, so he went out to the kitchen and read it to her while she was getting ready to bring in the dessert.

"I have a letter, too," Mrs. Hopkins said just before they left the table. "It's from Father. He will be home to-morrow evening. He can only stay two days, but he says he will have the week after next free so that we can go with him to the seashore if we like."

“Oh, goody! I’m glad as anything he’s coming to-morrow,” John cried. Next second his face fell. “I don’t want to go to the seashore, Mother. I’d rather stay home.”

“Probably Daddy and Mother would like to go,” Jimmy reminded. “Do you want to go, Mother?” His tone was rather wistful. He hated to leave Happy House for a week just then.

“No, Jimmy, I do not,” his mother answered decidedly. “I believe Father would rather stay at home, too. He is thinking of our pleasure.”

“Then let’s stay home, Mother!” Jimmy’s face grew radiant. “You’d rather do that, and so would we. There are such lots of nice things to do at Happy House. John and I want to go around with the fellows and play in the cave and have our first game of baseball; all the team are home now.”

“I don’t want to go to the sheashore,” calmly objected Junior. “I are going to stay home and make Doodle learn to talk.”

“We’re *all* going to stay home,” Jimmy said with satisfaction. His tone sounded quite like his father’s, “because *that’s* what we’d all *like* to do.”

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“ Yes, and because our house is really ‘ Happy House,’ ” added John.

“ And the three persons who have tried hardest to make it ‘ Happy House,’ ” smiled Mrs. Hopkins, “ are ”—she paused—“ Jimmy, John and Junior.”

THE END

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